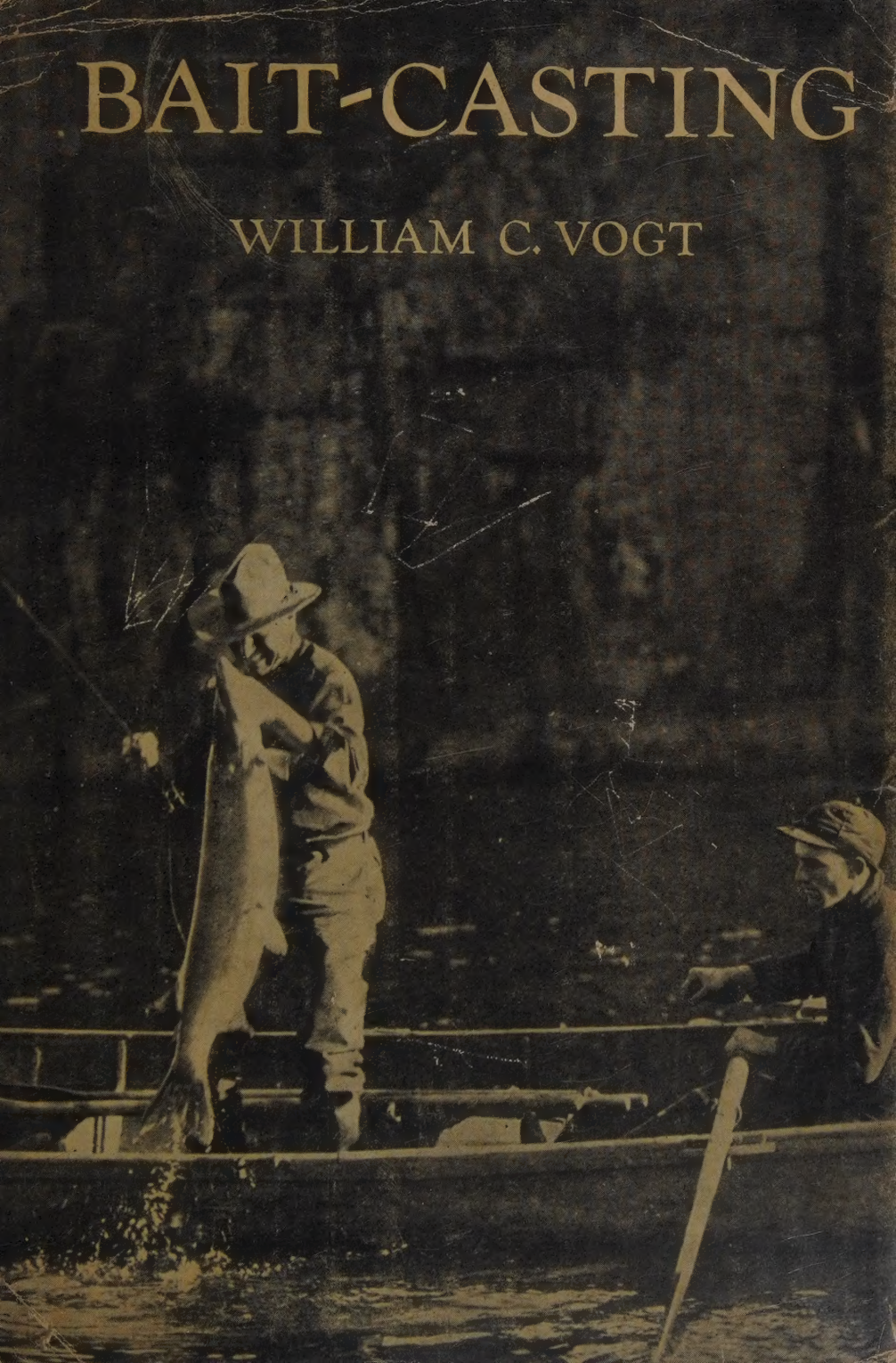
BAIT-CASTING

WILLIAM C. VOGT



$2.50

BAIT-CASTING

By WILLIAM C. VOGT

✦

W. C. VOGT is probably the most widely known expert with the fly-rod and bait-casting rod. "He knows the haunts of fish," says Robert Page Lincoln in his introduction to the book; "how and when to fish for them, the lures to use in catching them, and . . . he knows how to use the tackle in capturing these fish."

Mr. Vogt has tried to put into this book his own first-hand experiences with bait-casting. He discusses equipment, how to find the fish, the technique of casting, of striking and playing the fish, important considerations dealing with the weather, haunts, and instincts, and special problems arising with a change of locality and game.

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BAIT-CASTING

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Sincerely Yours

W. C. Voigt

BAIT-CASTING

BY

WILLIAM C. VOGT

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1928

VOGT

BAIT-CASTING

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FIRST EDITION

MADE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THIS BOOK

IS SINCERELY AND AFFECTIONATELY

DEDICATED

TO ALL LOVERS OF

FISHING AND THE OUT-OF-DOORS

INTRODUCING WILLIAM C. VOGT

By Robert Page Lincoln

WILLIAM C. VOGT, better known as "Smiling Bill Vogt," is one of those truly rare persons we meet in modern life, an expert in his calling—an expert, by the way, who can prove his authenticity to you before your own eyes and for your own interest. There are scientific anglers, authoritative anglers, and "only I know how it is done" anglers. There are anglers who write books learnedly, with a flourish and a bang, but it is strange that they are as ungettable as the elusive pearl. If you want to get them visibly to accord you an exhibition of what they are able to do you will never obtain any satisfaction. Because "Bill" Vogt can do all these things, he has stepped on sensitive toes.

If Vogt is nothing else he is a master of the fly-rod, and its cousin, the bait-casting rod; he is, as I have previously stated, an expert in his calling—he is an "expert fisherman" in that he knows the habits of fish, how and when to fish for them, the lures to use in catching them, and—most certain and particularly demanded of all—he knows how to use the tackle in capturing those same fish.

If there are fish in a water, Vogt will get them somehow or another in a manner that will surprise you. With flies and artificial lures in general he is a master, and his exhibitions and advice are not only scientifically correct, but lead one to overcome obstacles under his guidance, that otherwise would seem impossible of circumvention. "Bill" Vogt has the happy faculty of being naturally talkative and can explain a situation in a few words where most experts would take several pages.

The pleasure of his company is the exhilaration he brings to the pastime of angling for, as Prime has so pleasingly stated, "It is not all of fishing just to fish." The pleasures of angling should abound in a jolly companionship among men where the spirit is kept abundantly uppermost, and a good time is had all around. Many a man who has arranged his summer's trip without advice on the matter has not only utterly failed to get the satisfaction of fishing in a decent region, but has likewise failed to get in touch with the fish, sharing the common failure of not knowing their haunts and feeding places.

If the experience of an expert is depended upon, then the results are of greater consequence, and the sum total will surely be a red-letter event and a lasting memory.

To the ability of W. C. Vogt, his honesty, and his square dealing, I set my name in approval.

(*Signed*) Robert Page Lincoln

FOREWORD

THIS book was written because of the many requests from friends, who felt that my experiences would be of interest and help to others.

Much of it was prepared in the great outdoors, and the entire book has been written in the spirit of service, and with the hope of awakening in others a greater appreciation and love of nature.

All materials including the observations, experiments, recommendations, methods, and exhibition stunts are my own. They are not taken from the writings or suggestions of others. The photographs were also made in accordance with my ideas.

I have personally taught hundreds of people in different parts of the United States the art of fly- and bait-casting. My experience as a fisherman and teacher has covered twenty-five years. I have tried to put into this book the information I have acquired during this time, and I am hoping that those who read these pages will find helpful suggestions in an account of the methods which have brought success to me. If I can help my readers toward a greater proficiency in angling and a fuller enjoyment of the great outdoors, I shall feel that my efforts have been rewarded.

W. C. Vogt

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To the following sportsmen I wish gratefully to acknowledge the kind assistance and coöperation which made it possible for me to show many of the photographs in this book, several of which are taken from motion pictures:

E. F. Warner, *Field and Stream,* New York; A. B. Smith and M. M. Goodsill, Northern Pacific Railway; S. W. Swenson, photographer, Cumberland, Wisconsin; and Charles Stapf, Mississippi and St. Croix River guide, Prescott, Wisconsin. Also, to C. D. Velie, J. N. Collins, Payson Smith, H. E. Partridge, H. A. Douglas, Sumner T. McKnight, W. G. Fatchett, and C. E. Lewis of Minneapolis, Minn.; Charles Heddon, Dowagiac, Mich.; R. R. Brown, South Otselic, N. Y.; and Geo. F. McDuffee, Utica, N. Y.

The motion picture photographs show me in action using the correct method of bait-casting. They were taken by *Field and Stream,* Pathé News, Northern Pacific Railway, and others.

Most of the photographs shown in this book I took myself.

W. C. Vogt

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I
RODS AND REELS

BAIT-CASTING

CHAPTER I

RODS AND REELS

I SHALL not mention any particular brand of tackle in this book, although I am familiar with them all. For ten years I travelled throughout the United States selling fishing tackle; I handled most of the leading American and English products. I have seen rods, reels, lines, spoons, and baits made at the different factories, and I know the different brands at sight.

However, I am going to omit all manufacturers' names so that the reader will have a book that is in no way connected with advertising.

Bait-casters the world over agree that the best rod, both for accuracy and distance in tournaments and for practical fishing, is the six-strip split bamboo rod from 4½ to 6 feet long, weighing from 4 to 7 ounces. In the ideal rod the bamboo runs through the handle to the end of the butt. It is a pleasure to handle a rod like this because of its wonderful life, resiliency, and lightness. You actually have the rod itself in your

hand, and no "feel" is lost, as it is in the rods with detachable handles.

But because one-piece rods are so inconvenient, most casters use a two-piece rod with a short butt and a long tip. You get just about the same action from this as from the one-piece rod.

Most anglers know that a six-strip split bamboo rod is made of six strips of bamboo glued together like the wood in a lead pencil.

For most purposes the 5 and 5½ foot lengths are the best. The manufacturers make the rods for use with plugs and other baits of similar weight. If you want to cast lighter lures you must get a lighter rod. As between the light, medium, and heavy rods, the medium is the best for all-around work.

I have known men who got standard-make rods and did good work with them; then, as they became more expert, they attempted to cast lighter lures. The stiff rod was not satisfactory for this, and the men would go around blaming the rod and the manufacturer who made it. There are several makes and varieties of both hollow and solid steel rods. They should be selected with an eye to what they are going to be used for.

For example: suppose that a manufacturer makes spring-boards for the use of expert swimmers. He selects the best-seasoned material he can find and the boards are made by skilled workmen; the wood is full of life and spring. The board is put in place

It is there that we are going
With our rods and reels and traces
To a silent smoky Indian that we know
To a couch of new-pulled hemlock
With the starlight on our faces
For the red gods call us out and we must go.

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AND, SURE ENOUGH, WE WENT!

FISHING FROM HORSEBACK IS GOOD SPORT

LADIES ALSO ENJOY BAIT-CASTING

and three expert divers get up to give an exhibition of their skill.

The first one to step on it weighs 115 pounds. He attempts to do a forward summer-sault, but he falls almost flat. As he gets to shore he remarks, "That's a rotten plank. It's too stiff."

The next man weighs 150 pounds and makes a graceful and perfect summer-sault. When he gets back he exclaims, "That's a wonderful plank."

Then a man weighing 200 pounds comes forward. When he dives he gets no kick or spring out of the plank and grumbles, "The darned thing's too weak."

However, none of the statements is accurate. The plank can not be blamed because it did not suit the light man and the heavy man. It had been made for a man weighing between 150 and 160 pounds. Perhaps both the light man and the heavy man were more skilful divers than the man of medium weight, yet the audience condemned them both and laughed, saying, "Well, well. They both tried to blame it on the plank!"

There is nothing so funny about it. It simply happened that the two men didn't fit the plank, and the plank didn't fit the two men. Who is to blame? Certainly it is not the manufacturers. They can't have a plank for every individual, but they have several lengths and weights from which you can select, and they give you all possible expert advice while you are making your choice. So it is with rods.

ONE reason some men get started wrong is that they leave the selection of their outfit to an unreliable dealer. We all know that some dealers will sell anything to a beginner just to get it out of the store. And by the way, never buy or let anyone sell you an enamelled line for bait-casting. To watch a man try to bait-cast with an enamelled line would make a pup howl and a horse laugh.

THERE are many good brands of reels on the market today; their prices vary from three to fifty dollars. As with rods, a man should buy the best reel he can afford. Some fishermen would rather use the anti-back-lash reel (self-thumber) or the level-winder than the ordinary model.

I myself have tried all the different types, including the free-spool (on which the handle remains still while the spool revolves), but my favorite for all-around work is the reel without automatic devices. I do my own thumbing and winding. You can cast much farther and with less effort with a reel that has no anti-back-lash or level-wind attachment. Of course, the high-priced jewelled reels, on which the pinions run on agate or sapphire, spin much more freely than the ordinary variety.

I use a quadruple multiplier, on which the handle revolves once while the spool revolves four times. I also use a bit of old line for filler instead of an alu-

minum spool or a cork arbor. I think a double handle gives a better balance than the single handle; it does not wobble so much, and there seems to be less atmospheric resistance to it.

You should pay at least five dollars for a reel, but whether you have a five or a fifty dollar reel you should oil it without fail every day when it is in use.

When you buy a reel be sure that the handle is set forward and does not strike you on the knuckles as so many of them do. Often I have seen men's knuckles bleeding but it has not always been the fault of the reel. In many cases by merely unscrewing one end of the reel they could have set the handle forward as far as was needed.

You are pretty safe in buying any reel that can be taken apart without a screw-driver.

Some years ago I met an expert salmon-fly-caster who had a wonderfully balanced outfit. I had never used a salmon rod before. With his outfit and following his instructions, in less than an hour I was able to cast the fly with fair accuracy up to a distance of about 130 feet. It is getting started right and learning the fine points of the game that count in any kind of casting, not physical strength.

I once borrowed the outfit of a man who had held the world's long distance surf casting records for several years. The first time I tried it, following

his instructions, within an hour I was making fairly accurate casts of 300 to 365 feet. This all goes to prove that within a few hours one man may become a far better caster than someone else who has been at it for years and who thinks it takes a long, long time to learn it. Of course, it takes years of persistent practice to become a 95 or 100% bull's-eye man. But you don't need as much accuracy as that in order to fish.

A WORD about clothes. I'll never forget the first time I was all dressed up in new fishing clothes. I stopped off at a very small town in northern New York. There were several lumber-jacks standing around the station looking me over, and I felt quite chesty as I thought they were admiring my new suit. Then I heard one of them say: "That feller be one of them science fishermen."

He said it so loud that he scared a dog standing nearby. The other feller almost shouted: "One of them city fellers was up here last week, bass fishin'. He had a lot of fancy tackle, gold-plated rods, and his initials were on everything, even his belt. I showed him a pool where about fifty nice bass laid in the bottom. He covered himself right up in a pair of white rubber boots and tied them under his chin. He waded in up to his chest an', by jiminy cricket, drove every fish out; an' after fishin' a while he asks

me if I know any other good holes. If fish is brain food that feller oughta eat a whale a day."

The other fellow replied: "He be a doggone fool, all right."

I was wishing I had a couple of burlap bags for breeches and a blanket to keep around my rods.

II

EXPERIMENTS WITH BAIT-CASTING LINES

CHAPTER II

EXPERIMENTS WITH BAIT-CASTING LINES

AFTER years of costly experimenting with various makes and grades of bait-casting lines, I have found two that are thoroughly satisfactory both for fishing and in exhibition work. The hard-braided, waterproof, Japan-silk line gives longer service, but it is not as good for actual casting as the soft-braided line.

I tried an interesting experiment with a new soft-braided line of 18 pounds test. I tied one end of it around a tree, close to the ground, and then measured off 80 feet of line. Wrapping a cloth around my hand, I wound the line around it six times so that it could not slip or cut. Slowly and steadily I pulled the line taut. It stretched until it was 92 feet 11 inches long before it broke—12 feet 11 inches more than before. It had broken at the tree, next to the knot. Several times I stretched it more than 12 feet before it broke; and each time it snapped by the

knot. In each case the broken line snapped back to my feet like a rubber band. Of course, the line never contracts to its original length.

Once more I measured off 80 feet of line and pulled it taut. I then made sudden violent jerks of 4 or 5 feet, hoping to snap it. It was impossible.

It is easy to see that if a line "gives," like a rubber band, under violent jerks there are only two reasons why a big fish can break it. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred it is because the fisherman does not give an inch of line; the other time there may be a flaw, a broken strand or two, in the silk line.

I have found that the soft, square-braided line is the best there is for casting. It has four corners, which can be seen under a glass, and can be felt by rubbing the line between the thumb and finger.

I once tied one end of a new 15 pound test line around a tree, with the knot on the side, where it could not cut the line. Winding it around a cloth on my hand and measuring off 80 feet, as before, I began to make sudden jerks of two or three feet. I kept this up until it had stretched to 99 feet 8 inches; then it broke. Think of it! There was a "give" of almost 2½ feet to every 10 feet in that line. It broke in the middle. It can be seen that when a fisherman refuses to give line to a large fish the line will break and he will get away as soon as the limit of the stretch in the line is reached.

I used one of these square-braided lines twelve

times in four weeks. Each time I was casting steadily for four or five hours with spoons and wooden plugs, and landed a number of large fish. Afterwards I tied it around a tree and stretched it from 80 feet to 88 feet 4 inches before it snapped. Actual fishing does not take the life out of a line, even when it gets worn by friction. However, I have found out to my disappointment that testing a line before it is used does destroy its life.

I have landed canoeists, swimmers, and men in rowboats with even a light 12 pound test line by applying this "give" principle; it has been one of the secrets of my success. Often I have pulled a rowboat with two or three people in it to shore with a 15 pound test line. You can't break a rubber band—or a fishing line—until the limit of "give" has been reached.

I have experimented with almost all of the other lines. Several times, while making violent strikes with 35 and 40-pound test lines that have very little give, I have broken new bait-casting rods at the handle. If the strike is properly made and the line doesn't break, either a fly- or a bait-casting rod is likely to break at the thickest part, the handle.

Some people test lines by hanging dead weight on them, but such a test doesn't mean anything. A fish hasn't the same kind of pull that a piece of pig-iron has. They use spring scales at the factories. I have never before disclosed my "give" method of

testing lines. In all these tests I used standard lines such as you can buy from any dealer.

EVERY angler has his own preference as to the color of the line. I use a mottled "pepper and salt" line, small black specks on white. Next to that I prefer plain black.

The color of the line should depend a good deal on the depth of the water, the color of the bottom, and the vegetation around. If you look at a black line from below in clear water against a clear sky it is far more conspicuous than a white one. An olive-green shade no doubt fits in with vegetation better than black, but I have found black about as successful as any other. For a number of years I used pure white lines.

The color of the line really doesn't make much difference because the fish's eyes are focused on the motion of the bait rather than on the line.

NOTHING adds more to the pleasure of casting than a correctly filled reel.

First, taking the wooden spool, wind your bait-casting line tightly straight on to the reel. This can be done easily alone if you follow these directions. Either standing up or sitting down, place your feet close together and put the spool with the line on it between them; then tie the line to the spindle of the reel, making sure that the wooden spool between your

feet is revolving toward you as you unwind the line on to the reel. Wind old fishing line or white twine over the line until the reel is filled to within about 1/16th of an inch from the end of the spool. This allows for the swelling of the line.

Now take off this filler line and then take off the bait-casting line. Then first wind on all of the filler line tightly, and afterwards your bait-casting line. Your reel is then correctly filled.

THE beginner will find a 15 or 18-pound test line the most satisfactory. The 15-pound test line is easier to cast with. The line should always be dried after each day's fishing. It should also be tested afterwards at end used, and the weak part broken off. It is a good idea to reverse the line after it has been used a few days.

MANY men don't understand why they get back-lashes.

A back-lash is usually caused by improper thumbing. In many cases the caster makes the cast perfectly well, but as the bait is on its way he takes his thumb off the line, permitting the spool to revolve much faster than the bait can carry off the line. The result is a back-lash.

Sometimes the fault is not with the caster, but with the reel. Perhaps it is only one-half or two-thirds full of line when it back-lashes. A very poor

casting line will also cause back-lashes. To prevent back-lashes you should have the reel-spool nearly full. Of course you will have to allow a little space, because some lines get water-soaked and swell.

For example: let us consider any standard reel with a spool 1½ inches in diameter; it is a quadruple multiplier—the spool revolving four times to once for the handle. We are using a 16-pound test silk bait-casting line. If we make a cast of eighty feet, the handle will revolve fifty times, the spool two hundred. If the reel is only one-half or two-thirds full, the reel handle will have to revolve eighty-five times and the spool three hundred and forty. If the spool is not full it requires much more effort to make the same cast; the spool acquires greater momentum, and this results in a black-lash.

With a properly filled reel, with a spool four inches in diameter, the reel handle would have to revolve only twenty times and the spool eighty times in making an eighty foot cast.

When the 1½ inch diameter spool is full, it takes in eighteen inches of line with each turn of the handle; when it is half full, about eight inches. A properly filled reel-spool is of the greatest importance; often it will save fish which would otherwise be lost because a slack line is not taken up fast enough.

III

ARTIFICIAL BAITS

CHAPTER III

ARTIFICIAL BAITS

THERE are hundreds of varieties of artificial baits. You don't need a couple of dozen baits in order to catch fish; nor do you need to change your bait every five minutes. However, if you can afford it, it is good to have at least five different styles, each with a different movement. You should have, for instance, at least one fluted spoon, size 4½; one Junebug spinner about the same size as the spoon; one under-water wooden bait with a swimming or zig-zag movement; and a surface bait. This assortment ought to be enough to enable you to catch almost any kind of game fish.

METAL BAITS

A METAL bait from 3 to 4½ inches long, ¾ to 1½ inches wide, with a treble hook on the tail end, enamelled red with a white stripe outside and nickel or

copper on the inside, with a wobbling movement, is very good in casting for all game fish in from one to seven feet of water. Start retrieving very slowly as soon as it strikes the water. In deeper water, up to 12 feet, cast it out, let it sink to the bottom, feed the line out until it is slack, start the bait suddenly by making a dozen quick turns of the reel handle, then reel it in slowly as if you were trolling.

Moreover, any of the well-known minnows with a swimming movement—a sort of zig-zag from side to side—are very good.

Incidentally, the best colors for all baits are red and white, yellow, green, slate and olive-drab. Nickel-plated spoons and spinners with red inside are the best; next to them come the gold-plated ones with nickel inside; copper is also good.

SURFACE BAITS FOR BASS

For both large- and small-mouthed bass, in water from six inches to six feet deep where it is very weedy, the surface bait, properly used, is the most successful. Many people call any wooden bait a surface bait merely because it floats on the surface when not in action. A surface bait is one that always stays on top of the water.

I have found two that are more successful than the others. The first is a wooden bait with a nickel collar near the head, with red head and white body.

There is a variation of this which also has a red head and white body, but which has two nickel revolving spinners, one at the head and one at the tail. The other is a smaller bait with two ears, or propellers, at the head so placed that the whole head of the bait revolves.

The way to work this bait is to cast it up to the edge of the lilies and in the open places among the pads, weeds, and snags. Start it in action the moment it touches the water. Make a little jerk with your rod, raising the tip about a foot; then lower the tip again, make a turn or two with the reel handle to take in the slack, make another little jerk, lower the tip again, reel in the slack. Work it very slowly. Make the jerk hard enough so the bait will throw a little spray of water in the air. At no time let the bait lie dead more than three or four seconds. If a bass sees it, as a rule he will strike it the moment it touches the water. For this reason it is best to be alert and to expect a strike every cast.

After you have worked the bait about fifteen feet and have had no strike, reel it in slowly and steadily. If a fish strikes at it and does not get the hooks, don't stop reeling or working the bait, as some people do, but keep right on moving it. The moment the fish strikes and pulls the bait down, and you feel him, make a quick strike to set the hooks. If he is among lily pads, weeds, or other water growth, don't try to play him, but reel in just as fast as you can, keeping

the tip of the rod on a level with the top of your forehead, so his nose will be near the surface. This is the only successful way to land bass from among lilies and weeds, for if they get down in the weeds either you will lose them or they will break the line.

SPOONS AND SPINNERS

For muskellunge, northern pike, and pickerel, a nickel-plated fluted spoon is the most successful bait at all times during the open season. Copper or gold-plated spoons are also very good. In size they should be from No. 4 to No. 6, and should have white and red feathers on the hooks. They should be baited with pork rind, or a strip of fish belly. A piece of white linen cloth cut like a strip of pork rind is also satisfactory.

Junebug spinners are also good all-the-year-around bait for these fish, and for wall-eyed pike and bass. Baited with pork rind or a piece of white cloth they are just as effective for all game fish as live bait.

Spoons and spinners are the most difficult baits to cast, but in the long run they will catch more fish than anything else, including live bait. I have learned from experience that a good single hook on spoons and spinners is more effective than a treble hook.

The easiest way to cast a spoon or spinner is to put a "clinch-on" or "ringed sinker" an inch or an inch

FISHING FROM THE SHORE

Correct position of rod to make a long cast. My pupil and friend, Two Gun White Calf, whose face is on the Buffalo Nickel

WADING

Correct position of the rod while bait is travelling out in making a long cast

POSSIBLE POSITIONS FOR THE BAIT-CASTER

IN A BOAT—STANDING
Correct position of rod while retrieving bait

IN A BOAT—SEATED
Correct position of rod while retrieving bait

POSSIBLE POSITIONS FOR THE BAIT-CASTER

and a half long just ahead of the bait. In casting, see that your bait strikes the right way up. Reel it in just fast enough to keep it spinning nicely.

TO AVOID WEEDS

MANY a man ruins his whole day because his bait catches in so many weeds. To avoid this you have only to take almost any artificial bait that has two or three treble hooks on it and break off or file off one hook in each of the trebles; it is most satisfactory if you take the one that points down and forward. This leaves you with three double hooks on a bait that had three trebles. You will hook your fish just as well.

TO MAKE BARBLESS HOOKS

MANY bait-casters prefer to use barbless hooks. It is a simple matter to make a hook barbless. Just close the barb with a pair of plyers, a file, or even a stone.

LIVE BAIT

FROGS, shiners, small fish, helgermites, crawfish, worms and the like may be used by the bait-caster if he wishes to.

IV

LEARNING TO BAIT-CAST, STRIKE AND PLAY A FISH

CHAPTER IV

LEARNING TO BAIT-CAST, STRIKE AND PLAY A FISH

LEARNING THE OVERHEAD CAST

WHEN I first started to bait-cast, I used the side-swing or underhand cast. This method is inaccurate and is also very dangerous to anyone at the side of the caster. Sometimes my bait used to hit the water so hard that it would dive in, come right out again and shoot on. The only thing that kept it from going across the lake was a back-lash. A back-lash is also called a snarl; a good one looks very much like a bird's nest, and often goes by that name too. It has also been called many names not fit to print.

One day a friend with whom I was fishing remarked to me, "From the expression on your face and the way you grunt and shake the boat every time you cast, you look as though you were liable to burst a blood vessel or sprain your back. You'd think we were on the high seas, and yet the water's as smooth as glass. Won't you please sit down before you throw

yourself overboard? Every time your bait hits the water it looks like a whale spouting. No wonder we don't get any fish. And . . ."

I was getting ready to turn to him and say, "You pretend to be my friend yet you lecture me and bawl me out like that."

Then he got a strike and I forgot all about having been riled up.

When he had landed the fish, I said, "You win. I've decided to learn that overhead cast; show me how."

Since then I have had many occasions to be grateful for the calling down he gave me. There are still dozens of side- or underhand-casters who really believe that they can cast as far and as accurately as the overhead caster. The argument seems pretty well settled, however, by the fact that all bait-casting records both for distance and for accuracy have been made with the overhead cast.

Of course a man can be a wonderful caster without being a good fisherman. A good fisherman can catch fish every day because fish bite every day. But to be a really good fisherman a man must first know how to cast and how to use his outfit. It is just as easy to learn the overhead method of bait-casting as it is to drive an automobile, if you get started right.

The following description gives the important positions and movements necessary to the correct execution of the overhead cast.

First, point the rod directly at the object toward which you wish to cast. The reel handle should be on top and the palm of the hand down. Stand naturally on both feet, with all the muscles relaxed. Do not use your back or body in making the cast. For general position see Fig. 1, and for the position of the hand, Fig. 6.

Next, lift the rod, keeping it as close to the side of the face as possible. Bend the wrist freely. The palm of the hand is now turned skyward and the reel handle points to the ground. The line should be held firmly with the thumb. See Fig. 2 for body position, and Fig. 7 for position of hand.

We are now ready for the forward swing. Bring the rod directly forward, starting to release the pressure of the thumb as soon as the swing begins, but never taking thumb off the line. This movement ends with the body as in Fig. 3, and the hand as in Figs. 8 and 11. When the bait leaves the rod, it should travel in the form of an arc to the spot the caster has selected, so that when it strikes the water the force of the cast is spent and the bait will drop in the most natural way.

Meanwhile, watch the bait as it goes out. Hold the rod still when it reaches an angle of 30 or 45 degrees. Just before the bait touches the water firmly press the thumb on the line to stop the spool from revolving; then bring the left hand up and forward to grip the rod handle and palm the reel at the same

time. Grip the reel handle with the first two fingers and thumb. Bring the extended arms (Fig. 3) and outfit towards you, turning it and your hand to the right (Fig. 12). This motion starts the bait in action and takes up any slack line that may be there. Now you are in the best position to strike the fish the moment he hits the bait. For body position see Fig.4 and for that of the hands, Figs. 9 and 13. No fish can take it away with this hold. Make five or six quick turns and at the same time get the line between your thumb and first finger. Rest the butt of the rod just above your belt; then reel slowly. See Fig. 14, continuing the process. The bait is being slowly retrieved. The line is held between the first finger and thumb and guided on the spool as evenly and levelly as possible.

Let us suppose the fish now hits the bait. Strike at once by raising the rod toward the face with a sudden jerk—Fig. 15—not a slow pull. Make five or six quick turns of the reel handle to get control of the fish. Keep the rod at an angle of 30 or 40 degrees. For body position see Fig. 5; for position of the hands Figs. 9 and 15. The method of striking just described is the most successful because the fish hits on a tight line. You strike and lift the weight of the fish against the pressure and resistance of the water. It does not matter at what angle the fish strikes.

When the fish starts off, first press the finger

against the line on the front of the spool and then let go of the reel handle, (see Figs. 10 and 16); put on enough pressure to make the fish pull. Have your hand ready to grip the reel handle when he starts to slack up. Grip the reel handle—then the line as in Figs. 9 and 14. Keep the rod pointed toward the fish upward on an angle of about 30 to 45 degrees, so he gets the spring of the rod.

When using an anti-backlash, self-thumbing or level winding reel, hold the handle on the side when casting. If you are casting towards the shore, ninety-nine times out of a hundred the fish starts toward you and the deep water, so you must strike hard and reel fast to hook him. When you cast from the shore, he will start away from you after the strike, so it is easier to hook him in these circumstances.

THE FORWARD FLIP

In the past two years I have perfected the forward flip, and now I can get good accuracy with it up to a hundred and fifty feet. It is a very practical and useful method when you are casting from a shore where there are trees and overhanging branches in front of you and behind you, and where an overhead or side cast is impossible.

To do this, reel the bait close up to the tip of the rod, using the same grip on the rod and the reel as in

making an overhead cast. Point the tip of the rod almost straight down to the ground or water, and then start the rod forward and upward with a quick forceful stroke taking care to direct the tip of the rod towards the spot you wish to cast to. When the rod reaches an angle of about thirty or forty degrees, hold it still until the bait is about to touch the water, then bring your rod into position for retrieving the lure.

LEARNING TO STRIKE AND PLAY A FISH

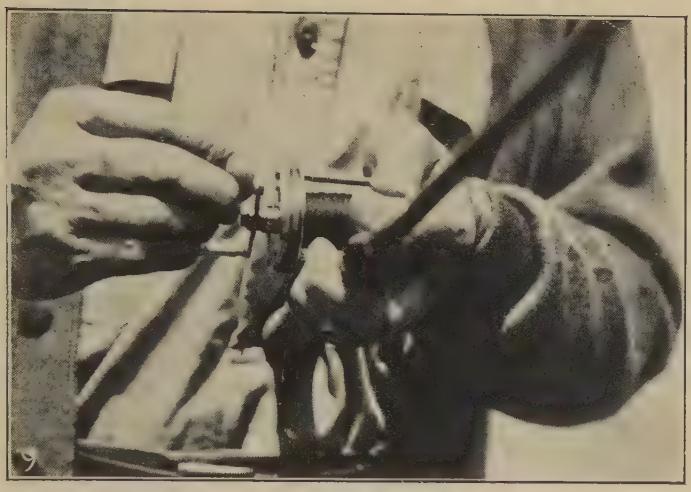
THE quickest way to learn to strike and play a fish is to get someone to act the part of the fish for you. Tie a weight on your line in the place of hooks and make a cast of from fifty to eighty feet. Your friend should stand about fifty feet from you and should let the line pass through his closed hand as you reel it in. Before the weight gets to his hand he should strike, holding the line tight and running out from ten to thirty feet. This gives you a chance to practice with your finger on the break. He should then slack the line and run toward you, and then run out again. Use your fingers as shown in the illustrations between pages 34 and 35. Always point the rod toward the fish while you are playing him.

About ten minutes of this sort of practice should be enough to make you familiar with the finger

MOTION-PICTURE ENLARGEMENTS

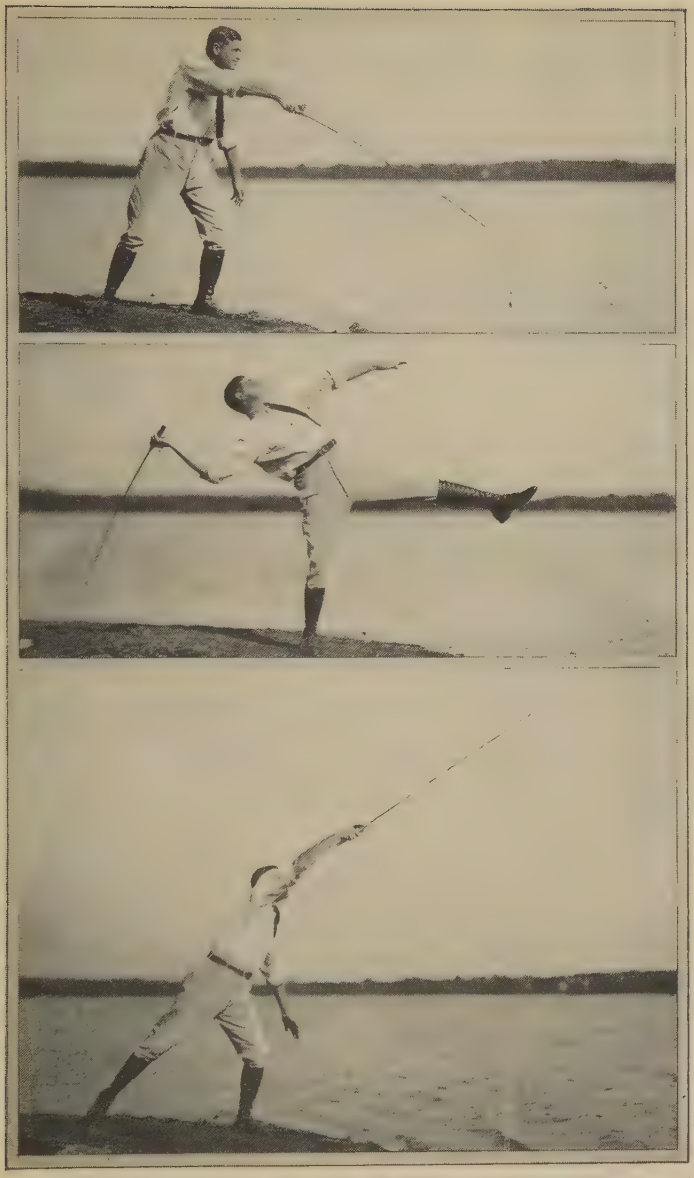
SHOWING POSITION OF BODY AND HANDS WHILE CASTING

PICTURES SHOWING DETAIL OF POSITIONS
OF HANDS WHILE CASTING



HOW TO HANDLE THE REEL

MORE DETAILED PICTURES SHOWING POSITIONS OF HANDS WHILE CASTING, STRIKING, AND PLAYING FISH



THE THREE CORRECT POSITIONS IN THE BODY CAST

IN ORDER FROM THE TOP DOWN

Besides getting great distance with this cast, it is fine exercise for the whole body

A FINE PLACE FOR BASS, PICKEREL, OR NORTHERN PIKE

ALONG THE OUTER EDGE OF THESE REEDS IS AN IDEAL PLACE FOR NORTHERN PIKE, PICKEREL, AND BASS

BAIT-CASTING FOR SMALL-MOUTH BLACK BASS

WITH SURFACE BAIT—FROM MOTION-PICTURE ENLARGEMENTS

The stumps in the distance are nearly one hundred feet away. The water is only about eight inches deep. Two bass struck the surface bait. Note (Fig. 3) that the bass hit the surface bait with such force that he rose nearly his full length out of water

Pictures show every movement of a small-mouthed black bass jumping for food, as recorded with a motion-picture camera on eleven inches of film. It happened in less than two seconds.

movements. If you think you have it down pat, go through the whole business with your eyes shut and you will soon find out how much you have really learned—and peeking is forbidden!

V

HOW TO FIND FISH

CHAPTER V

HOW TO FIND FISH

IT is impossible for any man to tell exactly where to find fish; like other animals, they have a habit of moving around from time to time. They may lie in one place for weeks or months, and then change to some other part of the lake; sometimes there are natural reasons for their doing this, but often there doesn't seem to be any real explanation.

When you arrive at a lake it is, of course, a good idea to ask the man from whom you rent your boat to direct you to the best spots. He may be perfectly truthful when he tells you that the fish are not biting because:

"Well, Jim Jones was here last week, and if he can't get them, no one can."

Don't let that discourage you. Jim Jones doesn't know it all. And sometimes you'll find out that this Jim Jones is a long-pole-and-live-bait fisherman who laughs at every bait-caster he ever saw.

Then again the boatman may say that it's no use fishing this lake unless you have little frogs 2½ inches long. He may ask to see your baits, and as he looks them over he may remark, "Those things are no good here; some fellows yesterday used the same thing. They never got a bite."

That doesn't mean anything, either. Perhaps the two fellows didn't even know how to cast. After he has made a few more remarks you probably feel like buying all the frogs in the country; then he'll lead you over to a large box of frogs or shiners and say, "Here's what you want."

From the way some of them talked, I used to think that guides knew it all. Now I know better.

Here are some good hints about where you may find such fish as Muskellunge, Bass, Pickerel, and Northern Pike:

In the first place, you are likely to find them wherever there are points or bars (either on the surface or submerged) extending out into lakes, bays, or coves; at the mouths of rivers and streams; in the channels between lakes; around docks and bridges; and in places where there are weeds, stumps, or brush. Lily pads are likely to be good places, unless there are so many carp about that they keep the water stirred up and frighten the fish away. The favorite depth of water for these fish is from to three to twelve feet.

When you get to within about four hundred feet of

the place where you have decided to fish, row quietly, making as little noise as possible, because the vibrations from the oars carry several hundred feet. Anchor your boat within casting distance; always fish the water nearest to you first. Stand or sit as quietly as possible. Make your casts about five feet apart. If you get a fish you are very likely to get another near the same spot. Stay in one place at least fifteen minutes before moving on. Then go about a hundred feet ahead and anchor again.

If you see a "break" or a "rise" from a fish within casting distance, cast a little over the ring. If you decide to row to within casting distance of the spot where the fish "broke," go as quickly and as quietly as possible.

It is a good idea to let the bait (with several hooks on it) go down to the bottom, so as to find out if there are any weeds. Where there are weeds there should be fish, and they are likely to strike at any time of day.

If the water is from six to ten feet deep, with a good weedy bottom, allow your bait to sink down well before you start to reel in. Reel in just fast enough to keep the bait in good motion. You get the best results reeling slowly. Make at least three casts in the same place, as sometimes a fish doesn't see the bait the first or the second time.

If the fish follows the bait to the boat without striking, don't make another cast until you feel that

he is well out of your sight. If you lift your arm while he is in sight, you will frighten him; if he is not frightened he will return to the spot he came from.

When fishing in water less than six feet deep it is well to try a surface bait, if there are any bass around. Surface baits are not much good for musky, pike, or pickerel.

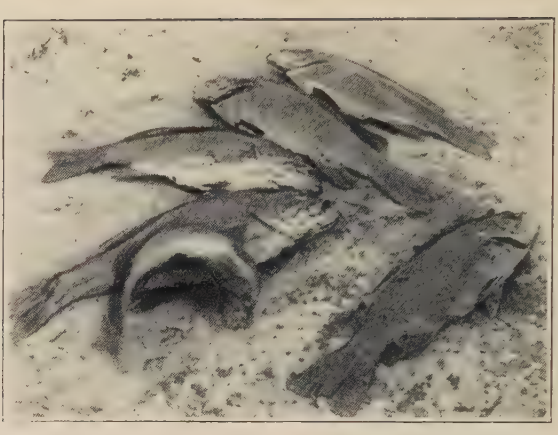
DECEIVING FISH

THE motive of the artificial bait-caster is to make the fish believe that "it's what it's not." Some people complain about deceiving fish that way. A few live-bait fishermen have even said to me: "I don't believe in deceiving a fish with a block of wood. I give him natural, live bait, such as frogs and shiners."

A little story may help to show which method is the more honest. A friend invites you to dinner and offers you a piece of your favorite pumpkin pie. You eat it and feel fine; then you start home only to find that your friend is holding you and that barbed hooks inside are causing torture that you can't bear.

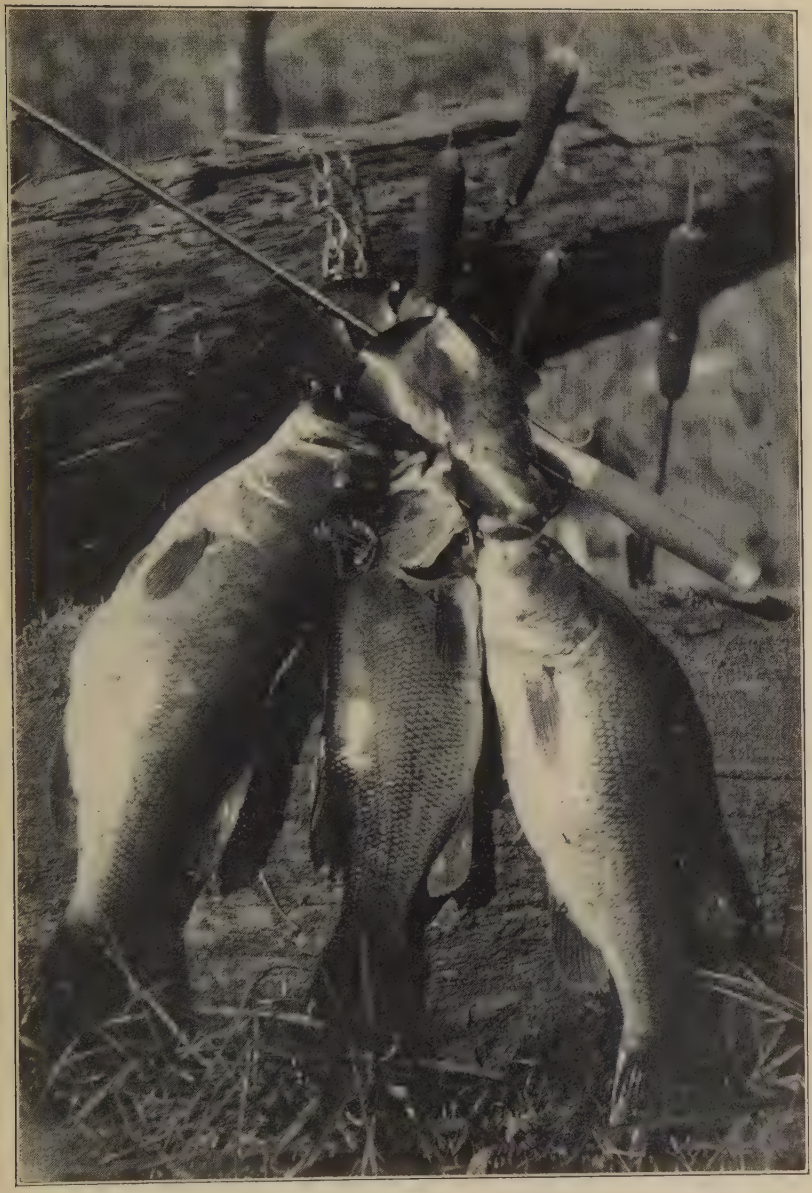
Another friend invites you to dinner—that is, he does if the first meal wasn't fatal. He, too, offers you a tempting piece of pumpkin pie. When you bite into it, you find that it's wood. You have been deceived and you resent it. You have some hooks in your lips; whether you get them out, or he takes them out and lets you go, depends on you both. There is

Here is the bronze-backed warrior himself, alive but helpless. He weighed 3¾ pounds. A small-mouthed black bass caught at the mouth of the St. Croix River where it empties into the Mississippi



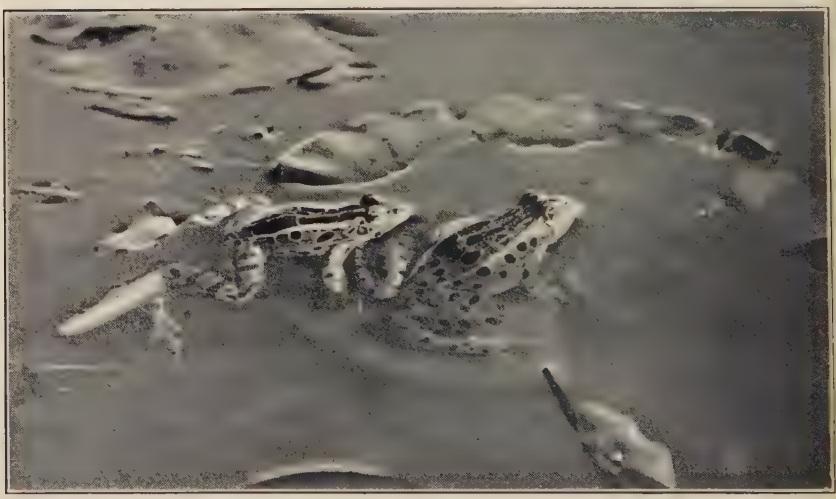
Six beauties taken from the St. Croix River, Wisconsin. All are small-mouthed black bass, weighing from 2½ to 4 pounds each

The best way to eat fish—with humble gratitude and keep your elbows below your ears as far as possible.



WHAT MORE THAN THESE COULD MORTAL ASK?

Row out there in the open water, keep back from the lily pads about seventy feet, move along very slowly and quietly and make casts about five feet apart up to the edge of the pads, using a surface bait, and you are sure to get some nice bass.



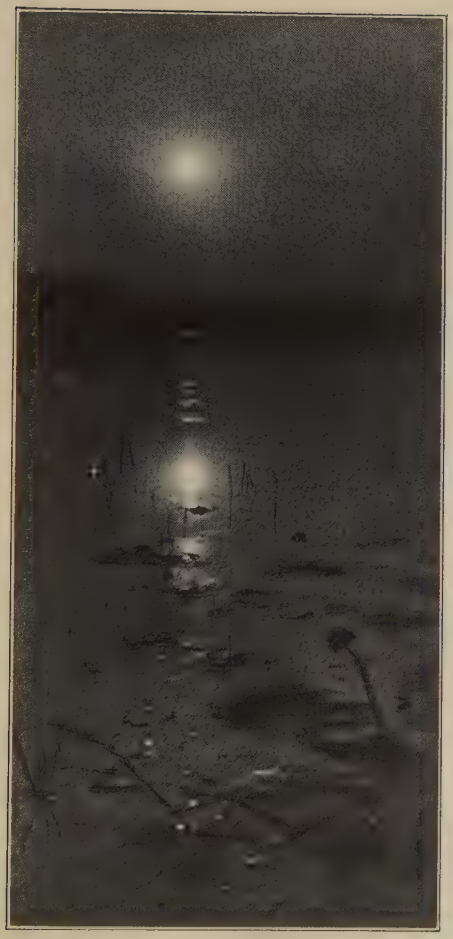
What a meal for some wily, hungry bass that may be lurking under the lily-pads!

THE BEST PLACE IS IN THE BAY
BEYOND THOSE TWO POINTS

AN IDEAL PLACE FOR BASS—AMONG LILY-PADS

ANOTHER HAUNT—ALONG THE EDGE
OF THE PICKEREL WEEDS

THESE PLAYED AMONG THE FLOWERS



From now until dark
it's great to be fishing

Get in my boat and we'll find a lake
Where there are fish and fish to take

And late at night when all is still
The Northern Lights flare from a hill.

W. C. Vogt

no torture, however. Which of the two deceived you the more?

I have often heard fishermen criticized for being cruel. But the fact is that you do not hurt a fish when you hook it through the lips any more than you hurt yourself when you put a pin through the end of your finger-nail. Fishing is not cruel when it is done in a scientific way, and the sport is greater.

MAGIC FISH LURES

MANY people still believe in the power of magic fish lures, in scented baits, and in other such forms of foolishness. Some of them are even advertised and sold. Experience has taught me that such things are worthless.

"The Chinese Secret of Catching Fish" is a foolish and amusing fraud. They try to make you believe that a few drops of Oil of Roedeum on a worm will attract fish so fast that they bite one another in trying to get at it. It is, moreover, expensive, costing three dollars an ounce. I once used this "Lure" from behind a blind where I could see every movement of the fish as they spied it. I followed the directions and used only a few drops on a worm. Fish would come up to the worm, nose it, and back off. As soon as I moved the bait the fish would rush up to nose it again, but they refused to take it. Trying again, I used only one drop on a worm, but it was no use. The fish

wouldn't bite. Then I used the same worms, dug in the same place, but without the Oil of Roedeum, and got the fish every time!

The only thing that this preparation does is to irritate the worm and make him wiggle for a few seconds; that is the only secret there is to it. You achieve the same result if you burn the end of the worm's tail before casting him into the water. Both methods are cruel and unsportsmanlike. There is no merit in any of the so-called magic or scented fish lures. Game fish go by sight, not by smell.

There is no doubt in my mind that at very close range game fish can smell. This, however, means nothing to a bait-caster, as northern pike, pickerel, trout, bass, muskies, pike, crappies, perch, salmon, and sunfish strike at moving objects without stopping to sniff at them. Judging by the way they hit a moving pork rind, you would think a pig would never be safe in the water. You can't imagine a bass starting out after any kind of moving object, fish, insect, or artificial bait, and then waiting to smell it and see what it is like before he hits it.

A few years ago some fishermen took me to a small eastern lake that I had never seen before. One of them claimed that both the large- and the small-mouthed bass in this lake would hit only two kinds of bait: his own brand, and pork rind. Now a fish doesn't look for the trade mark on a bait before biting

it; also, when fish can't get live frogs or whatever else they are used to, they'll eat something else.

The maker of this special bait cast from shore for an hour, had only three strikes and landed just one bass. Then he began to explain; he couldn't understand why they would not bite. At this same spot he had always caught a half-dozen or more in that length of time. The week before he had caught so many, the summer before even more. He made a circle of the lake without any better results. And yet, according to the natives, this was the man who "had the only bait that would catch fish in that lake."

I said to my friend, "Please take me to town. I want to buy some bait that will catch the fish in this lake."

In the village I bought two ears of corn, two large white onions, two large red ones, two good-sized red beets, two yellow carrots, two turnips with purple tops, two cucumbers, two parsnips, six frankfurters, and a pig kidney.

When we arrived at the lake, the fellow was still casting, but he had had no more strikes.

I borrowed my friend's bait-casting outfit, and remarked to the other fellow, "Just for fun, you start right here, using your own bait, and fish along. I will follow you."

I first used one of the ears of corn for bait, tying

a treble hook in the middle of it with a piece of fish line. It was so heavy that I was forced to cast underhanded with both hands in order not to break the rod. I jerked it along near the surface, and in eleven casts I had three strikes and landed two bass. The first was a large-mouthed one and weighed about a pound; the second was a small-mouthed bass and weighed two pounds. This second fellow hit the bait with such force that he was lifeless when I landed him.

Then I tied the hook to the middle of a frankfurter. On the first cast a bass hit it so hard that several pieces flew up in the air, and I landed him on a bare hook. I landed three more with frankfurters, and lost several.

One of the egg-shaped red onions which was as large as my fist came next. I ran the line through the centre of the onion and tied a treble hook to it. After six casts I landed one small bass. I peeled the dirty skin off, and caught two more. A white onion brought in one also. If fish smell, they surely must like onions. I even caught fish with bait that had been soaked in kerosene.

Before my rival left for home, I asked him, "What do you think of it now?"

"Well," he answered, "it's a darned funny thing. I could always get them before on my bait."

He had caught two bass and had had seven strikes when he stopped. I had caught nine bass and had

sixteen strikes. Again I repeat, fish go by sight. They are attracted by the motion of the bait.

THE belief that certain days are lucky is the bunk, as is the "Four O'Clock Theory." One day is no luckier than another for a fisherman who knows how to fish. My own experience has been that fish bite best in the evening, but some people prefer the early morning.

I HAD an amusing experience some years ago when I was fishing from the shore of a lake. I was carrying a tackle box large enough to hold a pail full of bait. A farmer came along and, as the cover was open, he looked them over. After a few minutes he picked up two wooden baits and said:

"I'd like to buy these two."

"What kind of fish do you want to catch with them?" I asked.

"I don't want to fish at all," was the reply. "I want to put them on my Christmas tree next year for the children to look at. They're darned pretty things."

VI

WEATHER, HAUNTS, AND INSTINCTS

CHAPTER VI

WEATHER, HAUNTS, AND INSTINCTS

EVERY angler has heard the remark, "The lake is in bloom," or "The water is all green," or "It's full of floating seeds." It is true that while the water is in this condition the fish don't strike so well at either artificial or live bait. I have never heard or read any explanation of this. Those who have tried to fish under such conditions know that sometimes even the brightest spoon can not be seen more than two feet below the surface of the water. I think the following experience I had will help to explain why fish don't strike when the water is like this.

About six years ago I was invited to fish for bass and northern pike in one of the large middle western rivers. When we got there the river was covered with a yellowish-green scum, and you could see small seeds all through the water. My friend knew the best places on the river to fish and was sure that we

could get a few fish anyway. We cast all day with spoons and wooden baits; one of the men on the party even used live bait; but none of us caught anything until about five o'clock, when I landed a twelve pound pike on a nickel-plated fluted spoon very close to the shore. I investigated the spot where the fish had struck, and found that it was a little pool of clear water made by a tiny stream that flowed into the river at this point. After we had cast for another hour without success, I asked my friend if there were any other rivers or streams running into this one.

"There is a small river about a hundred feet wide two miles or so up stream. We could go there," he said.

When we were within five hundred feet of this stream I had them shut off the motor, and we rowed up quietly to within a hundred feet of the mouth. We anchored there and began to cast in the clear water with spoons and wooden baits. For the next two hours we caught dozens of bass and northern pike with the very same baits that had been useless before. Of course, I thought it was because the fish could see the bait in this clear water. After a while I noticed that these tiny seeds were pressed in around the gills of some of the fish. Then I looked the rest of the fish over and found that the large pickerel I had caught down stream also had a lot of seeds pressed

TOO NICE TO EAT

A LARGE-MOUTH BASS

Pickerel weed in bloom is a beautiful sight to look at, with its large green glossy leaves and its purplish dark blue flowers. It is not the less lovely to the fisherman who knows that it is the haunt of the bass

No wonder fish love to be among the beautiful white pond lilies and pickerel weed. The flower of the pickerel weed is similar in shape to the lilac. In the distance to the right is the broad-leaf arrowhead with its delicate cream-colored flowers

between its gills, and that the flesh around looked very sore.

I think the real reason fish don't bite very well when the lake is in bloom is because these seeds get into their gills when they open their mouths to take in food. Then they get pressed in to the tender red flesh and remain there, irritating it.

I told this discovery to a well-known fish commissioner who is also a student of fish life, and he remarked that it was the best explanation he had ever heard.

Sometimes storms and winds work the scum and seeds to one side of the lake, and leave the other side almost clear. A lot of fish often congregate at such a place when that happens, and the fishing is much better than if there hadn't been any seeds at all.

HOOKED FISH MAKE FOR COVER

A FEW years ago a friend took me to a State Trout Hatchery in one of the New England States. As we were admiring the large brook trout, he remarked, "Do you suppose that if I threw this cigar in one of them would strike it?"

"They'll strike anything," I answered.

He tossed the cigar in. It hadn't even touched the water when a brook trout that must have weighed at least 3½ pounds struck, and got the big end of the

cigar in his mouth. Like a flash, he jumped out of the water twice, the cigar still in his mouth. We thought he was doing this to keep the other fish from getting it. Suddenly he dove for the bottom head first and buried himself in the leaves and mud until only about a third of his body was sticking out. My friend worked him lose with his cane, and we found that he was dead. When he bit down on the soft cigar, his fine teeth went through it. It was so light that he had not been able to shake it out, and in trying to get rid of it he had dived into the mud and choked to death.

I have often seen fish dive into the soft mud when they were scared or cornered by an enemy. Many anglers think that the reason large fish are never found dead is that they always get the hook out. This is not the case. If the hooks are so firmly fixed in his mouth that he can't open it, the first thing he usually does is to jump out of the water and to try to shake the hook out. Otherwise he will probably make for the weeds. In nearly every case he will die, but his body is wedged in so tight that it does not float to the surface, and no one ever sees it again.

Bullheads, turtles, eels, marten, fisher, and mink often eat them. Sometimes the wooden bait eventually works lose and comes to the surface. If it is a floater and someone finds it later, then it is claimed that the fish spit it out or worked it lose in the weeds. A fish has a poor chance of living when he is hooked

through both jaws, one of the red gills, or in the throat or gullet, even if he does get away.

FISH INSTINCT

A FRIEND and I once made an experiment in an attempt to find out whether fish have a sense of direction; whether they can return to a given place the way pigeons and dogs can. We caught a 9½ pound bass on a spawning bed with a surface bait, and then rowed to the opposite shore of the lake, a quarter of a mile away. The moment we set the bass free we started to row back to the spawning bed. When we got there, the fish had already arrived. Again I cast and hooked the fish; we were able to identify him by a small hole we had made in one of his fins.

We kept antagonizing another bass on the spawning bed, and caught him seven times in one day, using both surface and underwater bait. This fish we had also marked.

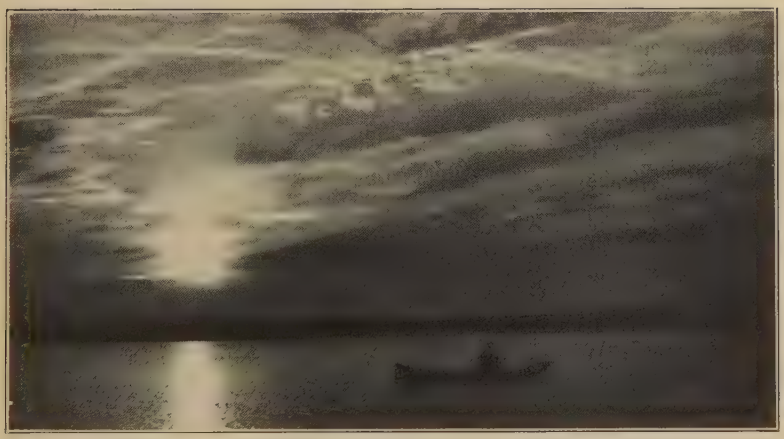
Several so-called scientists have announced that when a fish has once been hooked in his lips or snout he will not strike again. They claim that the hook causes a fungus growth to break out, and that eventually the fish dies from it. I am quite sure that a fish has no feeling in his snout. If he experienced any great pain when he was hooked, he would certainly not keep on striking four or five times in one day at the same bait.

These same writers claim that if a fish's scale is broken, or if he is handled with dry hands he dies. I am convinced that there is no truth in such statements. Too many anglers have caught perfectly healthy fish who had rusty old hooks in them, or who showed signs of having been seriously injured before.

Charles Stapf, a well-known guide at Prescott, Wisconsin, once marked a number of small-mouthed black bass with tags fastened to the end of their gills. Four or five months later he got reports from parties who had caught some of these bass 85 miles up stream from the place where they had been set free. The fish were in perfect condition, and there was no sign of irritation on the gills where the tags were fastened. Of course, if a fish is hooked in the tongue or the inner red gills, and if the hook is pulled recklessly out so that it tears the gill, and if it is then thrown thirty feet up in the air and hits the water so hard that it is stunned, under such conditions no one could be surprised if the fish dies.

Some men and boys show that they are not true sportsmen by the way they handle fish after they have hooked them. When they ought to be just as kind and thoughtful as they would to a bird or any other kind of animal, they heave the poor thing brutally up in the air, and instead of wishing him good luck, hurl a bunch of curses after him.

Before I leave the subject of instincts, I must tell a story at my own expense.



'Tis here that pleasures sweet and high
Prostrate to our embraces lie:
Such as to body, soul, or frame,
Create no sickness, sin, or shame.

—THOMAS WEAVER, M.A.

From a poem to his friend, Isaak Walton, 1649

It's nice to fish with bait or spoon,
By the silvery shining moon.

W. C. Vogt

Several years ago I was fishing a lake in Northern Michigan from shore. While playing a fish and just about to land him something rough and warm touched me on the back of my head. I felt a warm breath. I made a sudden jerk, lost the fish and also had a mental picture of a big black bear. I turned to find it was only a friendly cow that had licked the back of my head. Just then a man came along who started to drive the cows home. I told him what the cow had done and what a scare she gave me. He said, "Which cow was it?"

I replied, pointing, "That black and white one."

He replied, "Oh, she lost her calf about two weeks ago."

EXPERIMENTS WITH LIVE FROGS

MANY years ago when I hooked a frog through his lips, he reached up with his little baby-like hands, took hold of the shank of the hook and tried as hard as he could to pull it out of his mouth, while drops of blood dripped from his chin. The sight was so touching that then and there I resolved never to use another live frog for bait.

Two friends of mine, who were firm believers that you can catch more fish with live frogs than with artificial bait, worked out an amusing idea. Realizing that red is the bass's fighting color, they had a

dozen pairs of little red flannel pants made for the frogs. As soon as the pants got wet and got baggy at the knees, a bass would rush up and pull them off the frog. As the frog was hooked through the lips, one of the boys decided to put two hooks inside the pants, and fool the bass. But when he did that he found that the frog would not move after he had been put into the water.

The other fellow examined him closely, then remarked, "Can't you see that the hooks inside his pants are scratching his belly all up? No wonder he doesn't move."

After a while they finally caught a bass that way. Then one of them had the brilliant idea of painting the pants on the frogs with enamel. They put them in a chicken incubator and baked the enamel pants on, then they came back to fish. When the first frog hit the cold water the sudden change of temperature cracked the enamel and the pants fell off clean as a whistle. The same thing happened with every last one of them. Finally the boys gave up, and went back to pork rind instead of torturing the little animals.

A FISH TELESCOPE

An effective telescope for observing fish can be made with ordinary black tar-paper by merely rolling it into a tube and making one end of it fit your face.

The sides should be fastened down with large pins, clamps or nails so that no light can get in; 3½ feet is a useful length for them.

It works best when your back is to the sun; if the water is smooth you can put one end beneath the surface; if it is rough you should put it as close to the surface as possible without touching it. It is important that no light enter through the top of the telescope. It is surprising how far and how clearly you can see this way. When one end is under water you will have to come up for air once in a while; when you do this, don't look around, but keep your eyes focussed on the water, for the effect is somewhat like coming from a dark-room into the light and then going back again. With this arrangement you can see fish that it would be impossible to see otherwise.

It is a good idea to use foliage for disguise. The best method is just to tuck branches about three feet long under your belt, as shown in the illustration.

If you are patient, you will see many interesting sights. You may see a fish lying flat on its side on the bottom, as contented as a lamb. One may be standing on its head, its nose among the eggs, while it picks out the bad ones one by one and carries them four or five feet from the nest before spitting them out. It is only by standing on its nose that a fish can get a single bad egg without disturbing the rest. You may even see a fish lifting a stone as large as a baby's

head, and carrying it several feet on its nose. You may see a four-inch sunfish drive a five-pound bass or a ten-pound pike from its nest by biting its tail. It is hard to believe that such a small fish can make a large one hustle away.

Beside the fun of watching the movements of the fish, the telescope is also useful in locating bait and other objects lost in the water.

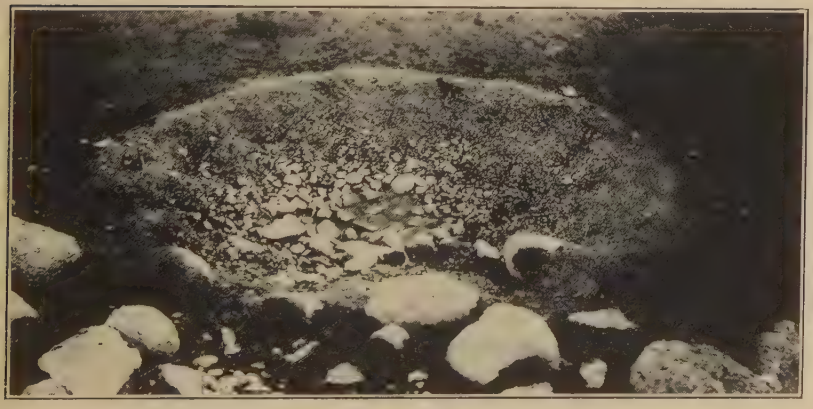
THE EFFECT OF STORMS ON FISH

CONTRARY to the belief of many people, thunder, lightning, wind, rain, and even snow storms do not stop fish from biting. For years I made it a point to fish as often as possible during violent storms, and I know absolutely that the vibrations caused by thunder and lightning do not scare fish. After all, why should they? It is the unnatural noises and vibrations that scare fish, not the natural ones.

Any keen observer of fish life knows that fish become used to the noise and vibration of motor boats and railroad trains. They are far more frightened by such sounds as the throwing over of an anchor, the scraping of a chain on the side of the boat, the scraping of feet, or other noises on the bottom of the boat such as dropping a tackle box, pounding, the flopping of fish, etc.

A white shirt and a white boat will often frighten fish in shallow water, but worst of all is the sight of

THE AUTHOR STUDYING FISH LIFE
WITH HIS TAR-PAPER TELESCOPE



A LARGE BASS SPAWNING BED

NEARLY TWO FEET IN DIAMETER

I WISH YOU COULD SEE THE SIZE OF THIS BASS !

A CLOSE-UP OF THE AUTHOR'S DISGUISE

a moving human being in shallow water. If there are no weeds to obstruct the view, fish can see a bait-caster at least 60 feet away.

When casting in from one to twelve feet of water it is important to make as little disturbance as possible. However, you won't bother the fish by shouting, whistling, singing, or even by cussing.

I spent the summer of 1918 in Montana and experimented every day for three months in a Rocky Mountain trout stream. I used six different types of trout flies, and each day I caught and kept ten fish (the limit the law allowed). They were all Eastern brook trout (commonly called speckled trout); the largest weighed about a pound and a half. They were all caught in the same pool, a deep hole near a bend in the stream.

I had arranged an artificial blind of brush about two feet above the surface of the water where the trout could hide; but I left an opening in it so that I could study their movements. There were usually from sixty to two hundred trout in the pool. I was always there during storms and found that they had no effect at all upon the way they struck.

On July 23, 1918, it snowed all day. I hooked at least fifty trout during this storm, and returned all but five. Whenever I would stamp my feet on the bank or would show myself, the trout would scatter in all directions like a bunch of firecrackers. Occasionally I would throw in old limbs and good-sized

stones, but they caused very little disturbance. They were not at all disturbed by the sight of large birds, beaver, or other animals.

I had another experience that helped convince me that there is nothing to the thunder and lightning theory. I spent the summer of 1925 on Shonewagosh Lake, eight miles north-east of Hackensack, Minnesota. Mr. A. R. M., who owns the entire north shore of the lake, had engaged me to find where the best fishing grounds were, to make soundings, get depths at different points, to catch fine specimens that could be mounted for his lodge, to discover the best places to plant aquatic plants for the protection of small fry, to find out which baits were the most successful, and to make suggestions about stocking the lake and improving the fishing in general. He was doing this so that his friends would have better sport.

The lake is over two and a half miles long and is a mile and a quarter wide at the widest point. It is spring-fed and has neither inlet nor outlet.

I started work on August 16, 1925, and fished every day for a month. At one time or another I must have heard all the stories that natives and old-timers always have about a lake. I'll quote a few of the things I was told.

"They don't bite in this lake in August during the dog days."

"The fish in this lake don't take artificial bait. There is too much natural feed in it."

"They're shedding their teeth this month. Their gums are sore, so they won't take anything."

"They're down in forty to fifty feet of water now, at the spring holes."

"The only way to get them now is with striped frogs two inches long." (Of course, I understood that if any of these frogs happened to be a sixteenth of an inch longer, the fish would get highly indignant.)

"The only way you can get them now is early in the morning, before daylight."

"If you could get some young mice . . ."

To this last remark I replied, "If it wasn't for being cruel, seems to me canary birds, young barn swallows, new-hatched chickens, young kangaroos, and suckling pigs ought to make good bait."

I can't print his reply, but there was no honey in it.

"I've fished this lake for eighteen years," another fellow said, "and the only time these babies bite is on cloudy days when the wind is from the south and there is a ripple on the surface. They're all on the south shore in the smooth water watching for food to blow in."

Can you imagine a lot of fish on the north shore of a lake twenty miles long and ten miles wide hik-

ing it to the south shore as soon as the wind blows from that direction?

Another one said, "June and September are the best times in this lake, about half an hour before dark." (I couldn't help wondering how the fish arranged their feeding time in the Land of the Midnight Sun.)

To hear some of them talk, you would think that the fish carried watches under their gills to keep the time of day.

Another said, "This is a poor year. Now last year . . ."

Fishermen offer more excuses than any other class of people on earth.

During the four weeks I spent at this lake dozens of anglers fished with all types of live and artificial bait. Some tried casting, some trolling, and some still fishing, but few of them had any success. Some good bait-casters from a large city came up, but they left in disgust saying there were no fish in the lake.

Some of the boys rowed around the shore-line of the lake in less than two hours, making casts from fifty to a hundred feet apart, while a man was rowing at a speed it would take a trotting horse to keep up with. Others tried to troll in from ten to fifty feet of water with the spoon only six inches below the surface. No wonder they didn't catch anything.

Playing the fish with a 5 foot, 3¾ ounce, split bamboo, two-piece rod gives the bait-caster real sport. Always have the top of the rod pointing toward the fish

A WILD ONE

If the hook is set well he is not apt to shake it out when he jumps like this

Grip the fish this way while its head is still under water

If you have no landing-net use the grip shown above. It is a safe way to lift a fish into the boat

Several of them, however, used my method and got results.

With Mr. M.'s permission, I shall now quote several extracts from my report to him on the month I spent there.

"During my four weeks' work I landed, on an average, thirty fish a day, and carefully returned those not wanted. The weather conditions were extremely varied; there were hot, cold, calm, windy, and rainy days, with several severe lightning and thunder storms. The weather has no effect at all on the way the fish strike. In a raw, chilly northern wind one afternoon I landed 63 northern pike, keeping eight that weighed from 3¼ to 8 pounds.

"One very hot, still afternoon I had 103 strikes and landed 70 northern and wall-eyed pike on a barbless hook. I kept the limit allowed (15) and returned the rest.

"During these four weeks I put into your live box 200 northern pike (so-called pickerel) ranging from 2¾ to 13 pounds apiece. As you requested, the largest is being mounted by the taxidermist at Hackensack. I also put in the live box 28 wall-eyed pike, ranging from 4 to 8½ pounds each; 14 large-mouthed bass, from 2½ to 4 pounds each; 100 yellow perch; and six sun-fish. I neither caught nor saw any croppies. Perfect specimens of wall-eyed pike and bass are also being mounted for you.

"Due to the fact that there is plenty of food in the lake the fish were very fat. There are millions of perch of sizes up to ten inches. I examined several dozen perch under a glass and found no signs of worms.

"The fish are all highly colored and have very prominent markings. The meat on all of them is very white, fine-grained and, as you know, delicious flavor. This is due to

the pure, cold spring water, the hard, rocky, gravel-and-sand bottom, and the healthy, submerged aquatic plants.

"The fish were all caught in from 4 to 12 feet of water between 100 and 300 feet off shore, or else near the bars and weed beds I have marked on the sketch. All the fish were found on the southern shore, except in the one case that I have noted on the sketch. They were all caught by bait-casting from a boat with a Junebug spinner, with a single hook. As bait I used pork rind, a small strip of pickerel, perch belly, or a piece of white cloth, similar to the samples given you. I also used a ¼ or ½ ounce pinch-on sinker fastened to the line or to the leader in front of the spinner.

"To get the best results you should anchor the boat at the places marked on the map and cast in every direction, letting the spinner sink almost to the bottom; then reel in very slowly. For perch, use a smaller spinner and a smaller hook; bait the hook with a very small piece of pork rind, perch belly, or white rag."

THE bait-caster fishes the water before he disturbs it; the man trolling fishes it after he has disturbed it.

Trolling in deep water is successful at times for musky, pickerel, and bass, but for results no method can compare with bait-casting, when it is properly done.

At last I had found a wilderness with no other sounds than those of Nature, and not a mortal could be seen

IT IS AS STILL AS GOD CREATED IT

Around rocky points like this above are ideal places for bass and pike Cast close up to the rocks

In Lake of the Woods there are over 16,000 islands like this crowned with virgin timber. Many are unnamed and probably neither white man nor Indian has set foot on them

Two large muskellunge and a northern pike
Caught near Flag Island in Lake of the Woods
The big musky weighed 49½ pounds

VII

SPECIAL PROBLEMS

CHAPTER VII

SPECIAL PROBLEMS

MUSKELLUNGE, PICKEREL, AND PIKE, RIVER FISHING, CHUBITIS AND BULLITIS

ONE summer when I had lost dozens of large muskellunge in four weeks' fishing, I decided that something must be wrong with my system. In nearly every case I had made perfect strikes, had kept the line tight, and had done my part in every way. The only thing I saw to blame was the hardness of the fishes' mouths.

One afternoon I had six strikes that would have sent any man's blood rushing to his head, but I landed only one fish—a thirty-one pounder. I was using a stiff five-foot bamboo rod, and had a good, free-running reel, double-handled and without any automatic devices, an 18 pound test line, and a Number 4¾ nickel-plated fluted spoon with feathered treble hook baited with a strip of pork rind.

I had perfect control of all the fish, and several

times I made a second strike and felt sure that I had the fish well hooked. I did not force them, but let them do all the work. When they rushed from me, I put my finger on the line with enough pressure to make them pull. But they all let go except the one I landed. Three of them let go near the boat where I could see them.

It was a great thrill to feel those big fish strike the bait. Two of them, however, took hold of it very gently, then held it very still—so still that you would hardly realize that a fish had touched the bait. But you got a feeling a real fisherman could never forget when they made the strike. Even so, the most cheerful person in the world would have been a little depressed to see three large muskies—none of them weighing less than thirty pounds—let go in one afternoon.

I sat down rather gloomily and tried to think what the trouble was, but I couldn't think of any reason why I should land 90% of the other fish that struck and yet not get the muskies. Finally I decided that I needed larger hooks, so the next day I got out a still larger treble hook and filed the points until they were sharp as a needle.

That afternoon I had five strikes, and again, to my disappointment, all I could land was one small fish—a 19-pounder. Half an hour after I landed this fish I had a strike about 80 feet from the boat, on a tight line. Then I had another good strike. I

called to the guide, "I guess I've got that boy hooked all right. Let's pull out into deeper water and anchor, so I can play him to a finish."

To my surprise, the old muskie wouldn't budge. He just sulked, and from the jerks I was pretty sure he was just shaking his head from side to side like a mad bull. I thought he must be under a snag, so the guide rowed over towards him, and I reeled in, keeping the line tight all the time. The fish started to come slowly toward the boat, and I reeled him up until we could get a look at him. This boy weighed not less than forty-five pounds.

"If I can slip my hand under his gill," I told the guide, "I'll land him first, then fight him to a finish in the bottom of the boat. Look at those cold, unmerciful eyes! Hold your oars still. I'm going to try to land him."

Moving slowly, I tried to slide my left hand under a gill. When I got within about two inches of his head, he turned and opened his mouth about two inches. The bait fell out and he went towards the bottom.

I sat down, almost lifeless. I started to get heartburn. Hot saliva gathered in my mouth. The guide looked at me and remarked, "You're pale in the face."

"To lose a fish like that," I replied in a weak voice, "would make an Indian pale. Please talk to me so I can forget it."

"Why don't you swear?" he asked.

"How can I," I answered, "when I've never learned how?"

"I'll tell you," he said, "about a little experience I had twelve years ago. I was rowing a fellow from Chicago. He was trolling and had been trolling for five days without getting a single strike.

"I said to him: 'Our luck ought to change soon!'

" 'Well,' he replied, 'I'm going to stay here and catch a musky if it takes me all summer.'

"He had no more than got the words out of his mouth when he got a terrible strike. I rowed as fast as I could for deep water. The fish made a rush, broke the tip off his steel rod, and kept right on going until he got to the end of the line, and that snapped in two. He sat there looking at his empty reel and broken rod a few minutes, silent as death.

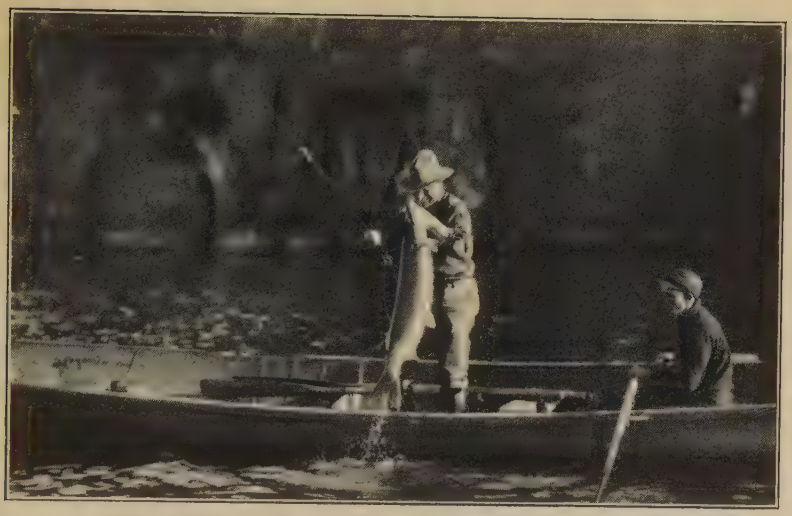
"He dropped the rod into the bottom of the boat, put both hands up to his head like this, shut his eyes and said softly, like a little child: 'Oh dear, oh dear.'

" 'Do you want me to swear for you?' I says.

" 'No, I'm a minister,' he said with a sad look.

"Now maybe you're a preacher," said the guide to me.

"No," I replied, "but swearing isn't going to help matters or tell me why I lose all these fish. The fish do all I expect of them. They take the hooks in their mouths, and hold them. The big trick is for me to make the fish keep the hooks in their mouths."



THE AUTHOR LANDS A 32-POUND MUSKY

The author comparing a large 32-pound musky with a 22-pound northern pike, both of which were landed by him while on a motion-picture expedition along the St. Croix River Valley, Wisconsin, with M. M. Goodsill, General Passenger Agent of the Northern Pacific Railway and a staff camera man.

Extracts from Sunday St. Paul *Pioneer Press*

A view of the St. Croix River, Wisconsin, seven miles below Taylor's Falls. Here two of us took four muskies in two days, total weight 128 pounds. We had 16 strikes. The fish were caught at the extreme left and at the point—extreme right

PLAYING A LARGE MUSKY

The 19-pound muskie that I had landed was lying at the bottom of the boat. I had noticed that when the spoon fell out of his mouth he snapped at one of the guide's shoes, so I told the guide:

"We'll take this fish ashore and try a few experiments with him."

The guide held the fish in his arms, and I picked up a very smooth stone about a foot long, an inch and a half thick and from 2 to 4 inches wide. I held the stone near his mouth, and like a flash he bit it, scaring us both. I let go of the stone, took out my handkerchief, wrapped it around my hand, then got a good grip on the stone and tried as hard as I could to pull it out of his mouth. It was no use. I then twisted the stone from side to side, breaking off two of his largest teeth and the points of several of the smaller ones, but the fish would not let go.

"Put him on the ground," I told the guide.

The moment that was done the stone fell out and the fish began to flop around. We both marvelled at the strength he had in those vice-like jaws of his.

"One more experiment," I said, "and then we'll kill him."

We put him on a large log, and I put a treble hook in his mouth, so the points were covered. I then had the guide press down on the fish's snout with both hands as hard as he could. I got back about 20 feet and jerked the line violently, hoping to set the hooks back of the barbs. It was an 18-pound test line,

but after half a dozen jerks it broke. The guide let go, the fish opened his mouth, and the hooks fell out. I felt that I had solved the mystery; future events proved that I was right.

The following morning as the guide and I were standing on the boat landing before starting for the day's sport, he called out:

"Look at that little muskie by the weed there! He can't weigh more than ten pounds."

The fish was in clear water not more than ten feet from us. My rod was in my hand, and on it was the same spoon with a treble hook and a piece of pork rind.

"Stand still," I said. "I'm going to make a little cast and show him this pretty spoon and the pork."

I cast the spoon about four feet the other side of him, but he didn't seem interested. However, as it was passing within six inches of his nose he made a little snap, the gills opened and flapped with the greatest ease, and he had it in his mouth.

"Nothing to it," I said to the guide. "That baby don't know he's got three nice sharp hooks in his face. But he'll know it when I strike. Now watch!"

I made a strike, and lifted him up and forward about a foot. Then, to my surprise, the bait came out and he swam slowly away into deeper water.

"That baby isn't so dumb as I thought he was," I remarked to the guide. "He surely had the hooks

A HUNDRED MILES AND MORE I FLOATED
DOWN A NORTHERN RIVER

AND AS I DRIFTED THROUGH ITS WILDERNESS
I CAST TOWARD THE SHORE FOR MUSKIES

ONE NIGHT I SPENT IN THIS DESERTED WICK-I-UP

AT DUSK THIS 34-POUND MUSKY WAS MY REWARD

covered. However, I'm sure I know what's wrong now. The pork rind is hanging two or three inches back of the hook. They bite at that, strike short, and the hooks get just barely into their mouths. The hook is held so tight in those vice-like jaws that no amount of jerking will move it, so there's no chance to set the hooks and they can simply let it go when they want to. I'll discard the treble and double hooks and use a good single hook, smaller than this one. I'll fasten the pork rind an inch or an inch and a half up the shank of the hook, and let the tail stick back of the hook about two inches, so they'll strike more toward the middle."

When we got to the fishing ground, a muskie followed the second cast I made, struck the bait, and I got him. From then on I landed 90 per cent of the fish that struck with a single hook. For the past six years I have found that the two most successful baits for musky, northern pike, pickerel, wall-eyed pike, and bass is the fluted spoon and Junebug spinner with gold-plated head, about the size of a regular No. 4½ nickel-plated fluted spoon, with a single strong bronze steel hook, size about 0.1, with a ¼ to ½ ounce clincher or ringed sinker 1½ or 2 inches long fastened just in front of the swivel on the line or leader, or else between the spinner and the swivel. It should be baited with one strip of pork rind, pickerel (or any fish) belly that has a white gloss to it. A strip of white linen cloth is also very satisfactory.

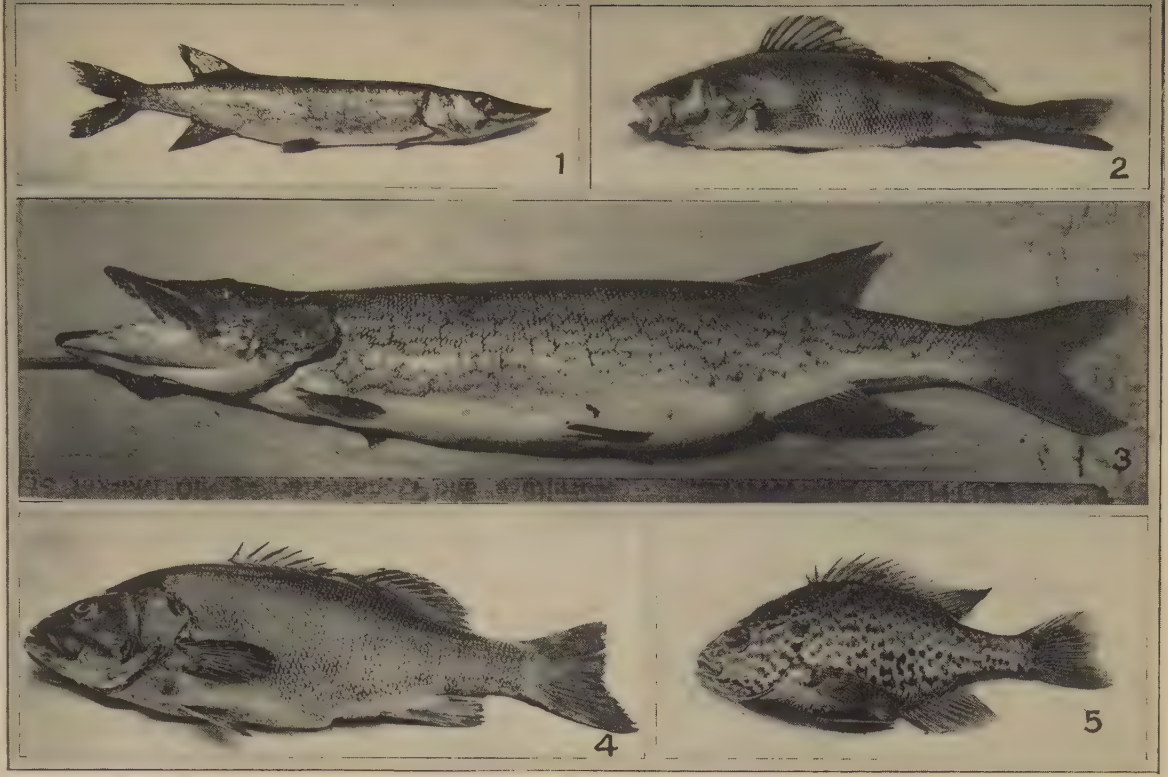
The bait should be fastened about an inch or an inch and a half up the shank of the hook. About two inches of it should trail on behind the hook. The bait should be tapered thin on the end so that it has a wiggling movement. This is a good bait for the boys who take little nips at it; it is also a good pike and bass bait.

PICKEREL AND NORTHERN PIKE

MANY people say "pickerel" when they are really referring to the northern pike.

The true pickerel, or chain pickerel, is a native of the New England States. The markings on it are like chains connected. I have caught them in all the New England States, and in parts of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The largest pickerel I ever caught weighed 7½ pounds. I caught that in a small lake about seven miles north-east of Waterbury, Connecticut, about twenty years ago; it is still claimed that since then no one has caught one any larger. The average size for them is from one to three pounds. A five-pounder is a big one.

The grass pike seldom grows to weigh more than one pound, and has no markings. It, too, is native to the Eastern States. Another pickerel, very much shorter and thicker than the chain pickerel, may be found in rivers, trout streams, and lakes. It takes a trout fly with the same force that a trout does, and



FIVE KINDS OF FISH CAUGHT IN CONNECTICUT IN 1924

1. GRASS PIKE 2. YELLOW PERCH 3. CHAIN PICKEREL 4. SMALL MOUTH BLACK BASS 5. SUN FISH

I thank my God that I have eyes
To see the beauty in the skies. W. C. VOGT

jumps out of the water, fights, and is as game as any brook trout of the same size. During the seven years when I fished in the Eastern States I found that the fluted nickel-plated spoon, size 4½, baited with pork rind, was the most effective artificial bait for chain pickerel and northern pike. In six years I have fished hundreds of lakes in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and North and South Dakota, but I have never caught or seen a chain pickerel. I have seen thousands of so-called pickerel, but they were all northern pike.

Pickerel are not spotted the way northern pike are. I have also caught dozens of so-called pickerel all along the St. Lawrence River, but they, too, were all northern pike. There is a lake in Glacier National Park that is teeming with northern pike. I caught dozens of them, but the native guides and the tourists called them pickerel.

The eastern pickerel has a beautiful habit of coming to the surface and shaking his head when he is hooked; often he succeeds in throwing the hook out. Both the pickerel and the northern pike love to linger among lily pads, weeds, and snags. There they find protection and are able to hide while they catch their food.

RIVER FISHING

GAME fish move about much more in fishing rivers than in lakes. In the rivers, you may find that a

place that was full of fish last year hasn't one this year. This is sometimes because the bottom of the river bed has changed; the water may be higher and faster one year than another, thus causing the small fish and the feed to adjust themselves differently and the game fish to do the same. Every practical fisherman knows that river fishing is never a sure thing.

Most people who have done any fishing know that if the water is muddy you should use larger or brighter bait, and work it more slowly and nearer the bottom. This is true of lake fishing as well, under similar conditions.

Along rivers you can usually find fish at the foot of dams, around bridges, at the mouth of streams coming in, at the foot of falls and rapids, along banks where there are thick, over-hanging branches, in deep holes and eddies, in little still-water bays, or anywhere you find stumps, piles of driftwood and the like. When you see a likely-looking place, it is well to anchor about seventy feet away and cast for at least ten minutes.

I have found that I get the best results by casting across stream and letting the current carry the bait down, while I reel in just fast enough to keep the spoon or bait in action.

CHUBITIS AND BULLITIS

I SHALL quote from my answer to a letter from my

old friend, Walter G. Fatchett, of Minneapolis, with whose permission it is printed.

Chicago, Ill.
January 14, 1927

Dear Walter:

You say you are surprised that I didn't find out that I had Chubitis until I was twenty-one years old. Listen; if you knew all the circumstances, you wouldn't be surprised. For some strange reason, despite all the fishing I did when I was a kid, I never caught a chub until I was seventeen. I could never figure it out. The same was true of dog-fish; I have prayed and hoped to catch a dog-fish some time, but I don't seem to be able to do it.

The first attack of Bullitis I ever had was when I was six years old; after that I had it all the time until I got Chubitis. When I was eight my Dad used to whip me for spending so much time in the barn yard, especially in the manure pile, looking for worms. In those days a manure pile smelt sweet to me and a worm was actually pretty to look at.

I had Bullitis about the same way you did, only harder. It was the cause of my missing many a meal and of my getting many a whipping, but I always had it the next day just the same. Whenever I was wanted they could be sure that I was either in the manure pile or at a deep hole in the creek about half a mile from our farm. As I grew older and wore leather boots with brass caps on them, Bullitis and stone bruises gradually left me. So many bullheads stuck me with their horns that every time one would land on the ground back of me my hands would start to bleed.

I remember that I hoisted several bullheads so far over my head that we never found them. One day I hoisted one out with all my strength behind it. As I turned to see how far

back in the bushes he was going to land something that felt like a rock hit me a crack along the side of the head. I put my hand up to my face and it came back covered with blood. The other bullhead boys with me looked my face over and found in my scalp what they thought was a prong from the bullhead's back. To make sure, they examined the bullhead, and sure enough his back spine, or needle as we called it, was broken off. Some of the kids told me I'd get blood poisoning, but after about ten minutes' talking I decided to stay instead of going home. (All I got was a good licking when I got back.)

While this had been going on, the bullhead had been gleefully playing on the ground. He gathered all the loose dirt he could around his body, and tried to hide, but he couldn't fool us because of his big, red, gasping mouth. After a lot of talking and hard pulling they got the hook out of the bullhead's belly.

The line I had in those days was supposed to be the strongest made; nothing but a horse could break it, they said. I also had a hand-peeled hickory pole at least 15 feet long. It was so heavy I often wonder how I carried it back and forth. I remember that when my school teacher saw it he wanted to take it for a flag pole, but I wouldn't let him.

At one time I owned three vinegar-keg corks. These came out of the bung-holes of kegs and were supposed to be the best. They were worth a lot more than the corks you bought at the stores. I got them through a man who knew a store keeper, and once I was offered ten cents for one of them. Why, I wouldn't have sold it to my grandmother! I used to hide them in the hay-mow for fear someone might steal one. I also owned three cast-iron nut sinkers weighing 2 or 3 ounces each, as well as several extra large, heavy tin cans for worms, and a big knife that had to be opened with a large nail because the spring was so strong.

The critical landing moment. How he churned the water! The rod and thumb are in the right position so let him pull out a little line

Here they are! The big one is 8¼ pounds, the other 7 pounds. Both are wall-eyed pike. Notice that the fins are tipped with white. The lower end of the tail is also white

See that point? There's a weed bed on both sides of it—cast up to the drop-off, you're sure to get some fish there. On the other side of the point to the right there's a bay that's also very good

These are from its crystal water: one bass, five northern and three wall-eyed pike. Notice that the wall-eyed pike have white on the end of their fins

This knife was always in demand, and was especially useful when it came to cutting open a fish when the hook was not in sight. I was supposed to be the best hooker and the best fish catcher because I always "had him hooked good, way down in his belly."

How the poor fish must have suffered! Still, we weren't bad when you compare us to some of the so-called high-class sportsmen today who throw the fish they catch into the bottom of a basket or a boat and let them flop around until they die —and some of them kick the fish in the face for daring to flop. At any rate we weren't cruel. We would always kill the fish if we hurt them. I'm sure we didn't ever start off while the fish were alive, as so many fishermen do these days.

I remember how we used to look at a bullhead's little eyes, and say:

"Ain't he got pretty little eyes? Look how glossy he is. Gee, don't they shine!"

I used to lie down and put my face so close to a bullhead's —to admire him—that he would flop and slap me in the face with his tail. Even today I think bullheads are as good looking as pigs; in many ways the expressions are alike. But when it comes to a real cute baby-face, honest and open, you can't beat a sunfish.

I could never see any dangerous look in a sunfish's eyes; in fact I believe that if they ever saw some of the fellows who fish for them they'd laugh themselves sick.

I lost many a bullhead because about every two minutes I'd lift up the stringer they were on and admire them. While I was doing this I'd get a nibble, and the other kids would yell:

"Bill's got a bite!"

Then I'd get so darned excited that I'd drop the stringer. That was the sad part of it. Now it makes me sad to keep them and glad to let them go.

When I had Bullitis the most annoying thing to me was when I'd run out of spit. I was a firm believer in spitting twice on each worm before offering it to a fish, and then an extra spit for good luck. Sometimes when I was jerking the worm back and forth violently in the air a lot of the spit would fly off, and then it was a case of re-spitting the worm.

One of the kids believed in only one spit, but he always caught the least fish. I had greater faith than any of them. After having shamefully mistreated about sixty worms a day, I'd run out of spit. While I waited for my bobber to bob up and down I'd silently start manufacturing fresh spit, and by some peculiar use of my tongue—I can't describe just how I did it—I'd make a whole mouthful.

When my bobber would start going down, I'd try to say, "I got one."

Then I'd lose all my spit. Sometimes I'd save a little on my chin. Once I nearly choked to death when I swallowed it.

Then the other bullhead kids would laugh and say, "Bill's lost his spit, somebody spit on his worm."

But no sir! I refused to let anyone spit on *my* worm. I'd just sit down and start making more spit.

When I was twelve, a man once took me into a pool hall to show me a pool table. When I saw everybody spitting, and all the spit on the floor, I could only think about how much spit they were wasting. Since then I have often wondered how in the world I could spit from 150 to 250 times in a few hours' fishing each day.

From this maybe you can realize that I had Bullitis all right. If you don't stop stirring me up I may get a final attack of it. Bullitis was the only thing that ever made me lie to my father and mother, and I honestly believe that if George Washington had had it, he would have lied just the way I did.

Do you think it's a blessing or a curse to be a country boy? I know that Chubitis is not a bad thing to get, because you

can cure it by simply walking along a little brook before the laws allows a feller to catch any other fish.

May you get many attacks of Chubitis this spring.

Your friend,

Bill

P. S. You will now understand why I had Bullitis first.

VIII

THEORIES AND EXPERIMENTS

CHAPTER VIII

THEORIES AND EXPERIMENTS

I AM convinced that fish are much more intelligent than they are given credit for being. If it didn't take real intelligence to catch them, you wouldn't be able to find a fish in a single lake or river today. People often remark that fish are fools because they bite at a piece of tin or wood. At least they see the object they are after. Man bites at any illusive proposition cast at him, and often swallows hook, line, and sinker.

Fish are faithful to the command in the Bible, "And God created . . . every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly . . . And God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters." (Genesis I, 21–22.) They are prevented from doing so even better by dishonest methods of catching them. The time will come when fishing for anything but trout in the

spring spawning season will be prohibited. That will save the game fish from being exterminated.

WEATHER conditions above the water have no effect upon fish. A calendar means nothing to them; they are not controlled by the planets or by atmospheric conditions, as some people seem to believe. Fish eat just as much when the moon is full as when it is at the quarter.

Using the telescope shown facing page 60 I once spent several months observing fish both in lakes and in streams. I discovered secrets about them that I had never heard of before. After this study I was more convinced than ever of the effectiveness of my method of luring fish and antagonizing them into striking.

Some of my most interesting discoveries concerned the way muskies, bass, and northern pike conceal themselves. They do it both to get food and to avoid being annoyed. My first thrill was when I found three northern pike within ten feet of each other with only their noses and eyes exposed above the tops of thick, mossy, fern-like weeds. What a sight it was! They were in about seven feet of water, clear as a crystal. It gave you a strange feeling to realize that three large fish could conceal themselves so completely. I was startled not to see any trace of their bodies.

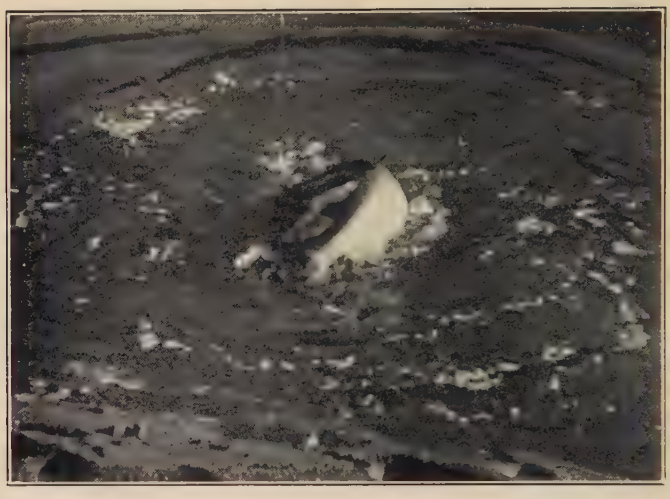
I watched them for about an hour; they didn't budge. Then I decided to show them to two old-

MUSKELLUNGE

The best grip to use in landing large fish. While the fish is still in the water slide the four fingers under the gills, keeping the thumb outside. Note that the hand is well forward toward the point of the mouth and there is no danger of cutting the fingers on the red gills with this grip. Smaller fish under four or five pounds can also be landed with this hold.

The correct way to string fish to keep them alive. If strung in this way they will live for at least eight days.

NORTHERN PIKE



A MUSKY READY TO BE LANDED ON SHORE

The safest way to land a large fish on shore or in a boat is to put your left hand under the gill being careful not to get your fingers between the red gills

time fishermen who were nearby. When I got back, it took me several minutes to locate them again. They hadn't moved an inch. I showed the men where they were, but they couldn't see them. I tried for ten minutes to convince them that the fish were there, and finally one of them turned to me and said:

"You're crazy! My eyes are as good as yours, and I don't see any fish, or even their eyes."

I was getting ready to let down a small sinker on the end of a line and hit the fish on the snout so that he would move. Suddenly the other man spoke up:

"I see one! Look, right there! Don't you see his eyes?"

"For the love of Mike! Have you gone nutty too? You two guys are crazy. Fish! If you see fish, then I'm blind. Why don't you drive 'em out?"

"Why? Because I want to see how long they will lie there."

It took me half an hour to make him see one of them. What he said when he finally did, I can't repeat. We all went away, but I returned four hours later. They were still there.

While I was watching them, I was surprised to see one of them reach up about a foot above the weeds and catch a little fish. He did it with something of the air of an expert baseball player sticking his hand up for a high line drive. He seemed somehow to pick it out of the air without effort. There was no commotion or disturbance about it; there was a flash of

gills as his mouth opened and closed, and it was all over in a second.

He didn't scale the fish, as some people think they do; he simply clamped it in those vice-like jaws. Naturally, when he turned it so he could swallow it head first many of the scales were rubbed off against his teeth. I think a fish can loosen its scales just as a bird can drop off its tail feathers when it is caught and held. This is the reason so many live-bait fishermen think that big fish scale their food before eating it.

In the mean time, the big fellow had lowered himself until he was covered up as he had been before. After this little interlude he lay there as if he were dead for more than an hour.

Two yellow perch swam along in a leisurely way about two feet above the weeds. When one of them got to within about a foot of those ice-cold, staring eyes, the pike shot up like a projectile, but missed. I thought he would chase the perch, but he didn't. As the perch darted off, very slowly and carefully he backed into his old place. I had been able to see his whole body before he went back; I estimated that he must have weighed at least ten pounds. In a few seconds all you could see of him were his eyes and the top of his snout. The other two fish had remained absolutely quiet all this time.

Finally I decided to raise my arm carefully to see whether that would disturb them, but it didn't. Then I raised it suddenly, and in a flash the eyes and

nose of the big fellow had disappeared. Without the slightest disturbance the others had also vanished. I kept watching, and ten minutes later one of them re-appeared. This experience helped convince me that muskies, pike, and bass do not go down into forty or fifty feet of water to feed.

My next experiment was in six feet of clear, quiet water where there was not a sign of a fish. Having got the telescope set, I let down a Junebug spinner into the weeds and moved it up and down. A number of fish appeared at once; the bright rays of the sun were reflected at all angles by the spinner and aroused the greatest curiosity. I cast the spinner with as little arm movement as possible and let it sink into the weeds until the line slackened. As I reeled it in it doubtless passed fish who were well concealed near the bottom, but it did not frighten them. Before long I had caught a number of fine fish.

This all goes to show that there may often be fish out of sight in the weeds below who laugh at the curses of the amateur Izaak Walton and at his constant desire to move on.

One afternoon I was casting at the mouth of the Oswegatchie River, New York, where it empties into the St. Lawrence. The river is about two hundred feet wide at this point. It seemed to me that this afternoon all the fish were on the far shore. I was so interested in trying to cast across to the other side

that I was not aware that anyone was watching me from the bridge. Suddenly I heard someone say:

"What's that guy trying to do?"

"Can't you see?" was the answer. "He's trying to measure the river."

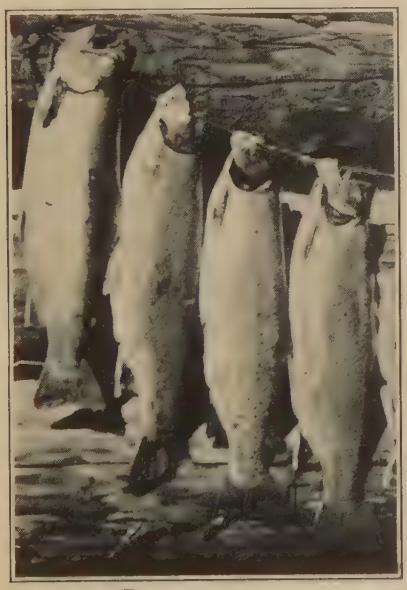
He doubtless took me for a surveyor.

One spring when I was in Virginia I taught four men my method of using surface bait. The next year these four men caught the four largest bass caught in the state, and won the first four prizes in the *Field and Stream* contest for the largest bass caught in the Southern Division of the United States. This proves that other people can be successful with my method, if they use it correctly. Dozens of my pupils in every section of the country have had and are having the greatest success in catching game fish.

On this same trip I gave two public demonstrations of catching bass (they sometimes call them trout in the south) with surface bait. While dozens of sportsmen were following me in row-boats and canoes, I landed 159 large-mouthed bass in 9 hours and 15 minutes. The largest of them weighed 12¾ pounds; I returned all of them except four, one of these latter weighing a little over nine pounds. A hook got into this fellow's eye and head, so I felt it best to kill him. The other three we ate to find out how good the flavor of their meat was.

In the other public demonstration, given a few

View of Two Medicine Lakes in Glacier National Park, Montana. The picture was taken at the time the trout below were caught from the shore at X by bait-casting by the Author



Four trout caught on the eastern shore near the outlet of Two Medicine River, in less than one hour, bait-casting with a No. 1 Parmecheene Belle bass fly and a No. 3 gold-plated spinner

Left to right: Cut-throat or black-spotted trout, 5¾ lbs.; Eastern brook or speckled trout, 6¼ lbs.; Cut-throat, 5 lbs., 11 oz.; Eastern brook, 6 lbs., 2 oz.

St. Mary's Lake in the Rocky Mountains, Glacier National Park, Montana, where the Author caught some large trout by bait-casting

A beautiful Mackinaw or lake trout taken from the shore with the same outfit

weeks later, I landed 561 big-mouthed bass with surface bait in three days. I cast in two lakes. The largest fish I caught weighed 10 pounds 4 ounces. I returned all but eight of these fish unharmed. The object of these exhibitions was to prove to the natives and to sportsmen in general that it was poor sport and bad for the future of bass fishing to allow the catching of bass during the spawning season. My demonstration helped the cause, for two years later a law was passed closing the spring months for bass fishing in the State of Virginia.

WHEN FISH PLAY

MANY anglers believe that when fish jump they are playing, and that they won't bite until they have had their fun. As a matter of fact, fish do most of their playing under water when they are out of sight.

I have visited most of the fish hatcheries in the United States and often I have asked, "What makes the fish jump like that?"

"They are playing," was the answer in almost every case.

Most of this jumping, or so-called "playing," is done when the water is very smooth, usually toward evening and sometimes after dark.

I learned some facts about this phenomenon when I was visiting the trout hatchery at Sisson, California, which is said to be the largest in the United States

and the second largest in the world. The hatchery was in a small natural lake fed by crystal-clear spring water; the banks were covered with large ever-green trees. The water was seldom ever ruffled by the wind. Every evening thousands of the six million young four-inch salmon could be seen jumping out of the water at the same time. It seemed to be raining fish; the sound was like that of a small water-fall. If they were playing, they certainly went at it as if their lives depended on it—or as if someone had charged them with electricity.

After watching them for several weeks I became suspicious and got permission to wade in among them in my bathing suit. When they began to play, I went in up to my hips and stood still. Hundreds of fish were jumping out of the water within a few feet of me. I turned toward the setting sun, and it didn't take me long to find that there were billions of tiny insects flying just above the surface of the water. They were so small that I couldn't make them out if they were more than five feet away from me. Suddenly a slight breeze passed over the water where I was standing and the jumping stopped. There could be no question but that it was because the insects had blown away, for where the water was smooth the fish were still jumping.

The hair on my legs is rather long, and several times I felt as though someone were pulling it. Looking down, I noticed that the hair looked kinky, and was

standing out and waving very slowly in the water. A little fish would run up, bite a hair, and start to rush off with it. This was the cause of the pain I felt. Now, were they playing, or were they looking for food? I pulled out several hairs and dropped them on the surface of the water. Quick as a flash the fish had them. The pain became so great that I had to go back to the shore. I felt as if I were receiving a steady succession of electric shocks.

The breeze let up shortly, and a few minutes later the jumping began once more. I could not, however, see the insects that caused it, more than five feet from me, and I have very good sight.

Other experiences have confirmed my belief that fish only jump out of the water to get something they see in the air. It may be the tiniest bug that attracts them, or even a bird flying far above the water.

Fifteen large croppies caught by bait-casting on a No. 3 red-and-white colored fly, baited with a small pork rind which is so placed as to extend one inch over the hook. A No. 3 nickel-plated spinner or Junebug spinner is best

A dozen nice sunfish taken by bait-casting on a No. 6 McGinty fly, with a small spinner The largest fish is nine inches long

PLAYGROUND!

IX

HOW TO TAKE CARE OF FISH

CHAPTER IX

HOW TO TAKE CARE OF FISH

MANY fishermen still believe that fish will keep longer if they are not cleaned than if you remove their insides and gills. After a good many experiments I am sure that you can keep fish twice as long if you bleed and clean them.

Anyone can prove this very easily for himself by experimenting with two fish of the same species and of about the same size. Kill one of them by a sharp blow on the head and leave it as it is. Kill the other the same way, bleed it, cut it open, and clean it. Wrap both fish in plain paper and put them aside in the shade either indoors or outside. Leave them there for several days. It won't be difficult to discover which method you prefer; the one you dressed will still be sweet.

To kill and bleed a fish, first push your finger or thumb through the thin tissue as shown in the illustration. Allow the blood to run out, by holding it

head down. Place the fish on its back and open it from the rear. Put two or more fingers inside and turn the palm of your hand upward. To prevent cutting the intestines, move both hands forward at the same time. Then take out the gills. The head may be removed by merely pushing it back and giving it a twist.

Do not wash the fish, but wipe out the insides with a cloth, paper, green leaves, or grass. Wrap it in paper until it is as nearly air-tight as possible. If prepared in this way and kept in the shade it will keep fresh for several days, even in the hottest weather. Scale and wash the fish before cooking.

You should always think first of cleanliness. No one would think of eating an animal that had died of drowning or of exposure, and had lain for hours without being cared for.

HOW TO FRY FISH

Like other meats, fish taste best when they have been dead from twenty-four to thirty-six hours.

To cook fish, after they have been cleaned as described above, first cut the fins off close to the body. Do not pull them out, for that leaves openings through which much of the flavor escapes while they are cooking.

Keep the fish in a cool place until you are ready to fry them. Wash the fish clean, shake the water off,

THE PROPER WAY TO CLEAN FISH

THIS IS THE LIFE
THAT MAKES BETTER BOYS AND BETTER MEN

dry them with a clean cloth or paper, and salt them on the inside. Then take a heavy iron or steel frying pan (the old-fashioned kind, if you have one) and put about four large tablespoonfuls of pure leaf lard into it. Heat the lard to the smoking point and then, if it is possible, put the fish in whole with the skin on. If it is too large, cut it in half (not down the back, but crosswise). If you have cut it, hold the end you cut in the lard for half a minute so the fresh cut will be closed and the juice and natural flavor of the fish will be preserved. Then put it in on its side.

When the pan is full, put a lid or cover over it and leave it for about two minutes. Then turn the fish over, taking care not to punch holes through the skin. Then put the cover back again for about three minutes.

Remove the cover and keep frying the fish until they are done to a golden rusty color. You can tell when they are done by trying to loosen the backbone from the meat nearest the head. Salt them on both sides when you take them out of the pan, and serve them hot.

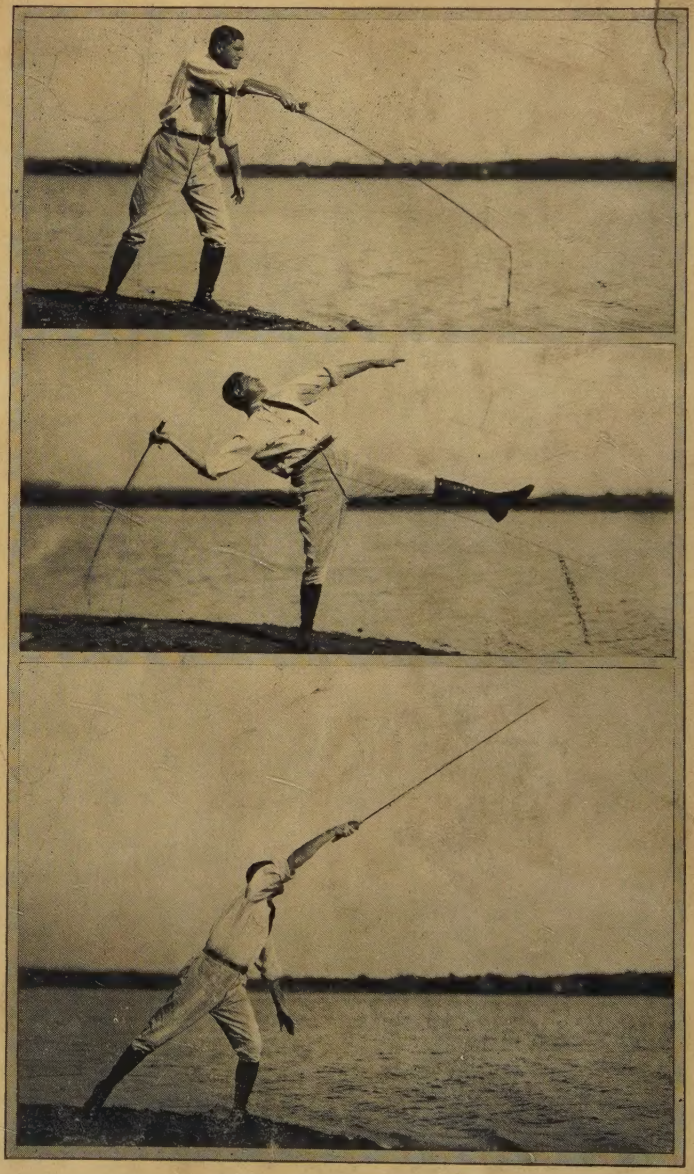
To remove the bones, run a fork down one side of the backbone, lift the meat off, lift up the thick end of the backbone with your fingers, using a fork to help loosen the meat.

All the natural fish flavor is retained when they are fried in this way. This delicious flavor is lost when

you fry them in bacon fat, or roll them in flour, corn-meal, or bread-crumbs. If you have no lard, the fat from salt pork will do.

I have tried fish boiled, baked, pickeled, planked, smoked, and fish cooked in clay, but the old-fashioned way of frying them seems to suit most people best. Pickerel, musky, and wall-eyed pike are very good when fried with onions.

THE END OF A PERFECT DAY



The Purpose of this Book
is
to Tell How it's Done